



Stockton Street Corridor Study: A Better Balance



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Introduction

Team Stockton includes Anna Chow, Nancy Lo, Queena Chen, and Steven Chang. Each person in our group brings different skills which makes our group a very well rounded group. Our group chooses to do our final project on Stockton Street because we felt like it was a good challenge for us.

Most of our group grew up in San Francisco, but we didn't know much about Stockton Street. Most of us knew the obvious facts about Stockton Street like where to find the best food on Stockton Street or how crowded Stockton Street was. But our group didn't know the specific conditions on Stockton Street like how many people lived on Stockton Street or how many people goes through Stockton Street each day. Through reading different reports, field work, interview, and doing different research, our group was able to understand the condition and needs of Stockton Street. In this report, our group will discuss the current housing, transportation, economic development, and open space conditions of Stockton Street and what we propose to improve the existing conditions of Stockton Street.

Existing Conditions

Housing

Stockton Street is a popular and busy commercial street for both residents and visitors. The rate of people shopping on Stockton Street is high as well as the amount of residents living on Stockton Street. Through field work, we have accounted for 963 housing units, most of which are single room occupancy (SRO). SROs consist of a single room, shared bathroom, as well as a shared kitchen for all residents in the building. SRO residents are typically long term, low-income, and senior renters. On average, 88% of Chinatown residents are renters. A single SRO building on Stockton Street has the potential to house 90 occupants. According to the 2010 Census, the number of people living on the blocks on Stockton Street between Columbus and Sacramento range from 186 to 600 people per block

Transportation

Public Transit

Both residents and visitors of Chinatown heavily rely on public transit to travel to Chinatown. There are three MUNI bus lines that run through Stockton Street: the 30, 45, 8X, 8AX, and 8BX. Within Van Ness Avenue to Kearny Street, these five buses serve over 27,500 customers during an average weekday.¹ The stops in Chinatown are the busiest and accommodate for around 6,000 passengers per day. The Stockton Street and Washington Street intersection, for example, accommodates a daily load of 6,313 passengers.² Bus stops on Stockton Street have one of the highest passenger loading off and on rates.

¹ <http://www.sfmta.com/cms/mtep/30StocktonProposals.htm>

² http://www.sfmta.com/cms/rtep/documents/Binder_030.pdf



Figure 1 This graph describes passenger loading and volume rates for a 30 Stockton northbound on a typical weekday. Passenger volume spikes at the bus stops of Stockton Street between Sacramento and Columbus. The large portion of circles being colored white signifies that many people are boarding off at Chinatown. [Source: SFMTA]

Chinatown residents have one of the lowest car ownership rates in any neighborhood of San Francisco. According to the 2010 Census, 80% of residents do not own a vehicle. Despite the resident’s low car ownership rate, public transit on Stockton faces one of the worst congestion in San Francisco. Buses are filled to their capacity during peak hours and riders are often crammed tightly inside the buses. From Van Ness Avenue to Kearny Street, the 30 Stockton is only able to operate an average speed of 5.6 miles per hour during peak hours.³ SF MTA cites that narrow traffic lanes in Chinatown and traffic congestion as major sources of delay. The Central Subway Project is projected to ease congestion within the Stockton Street Corridor.

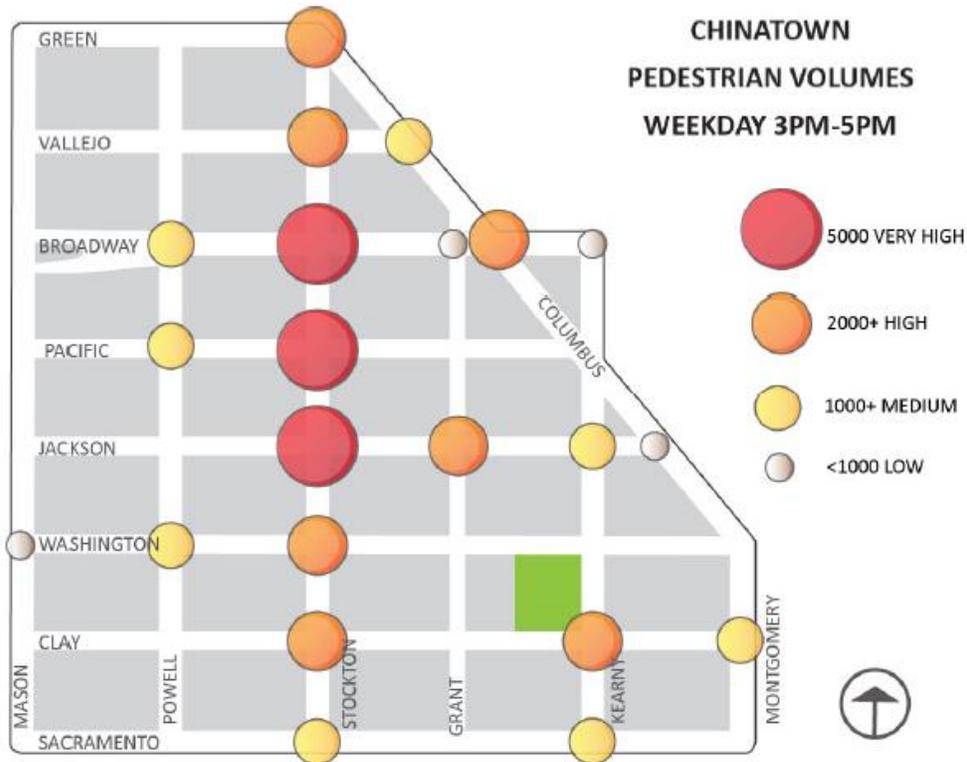
Walking

Chinatown is one of the densest neighborhoods in San Francisco, receiving heavy foot traffic. Within Chinatown, Stockton Street has the heaviest pedestrian volume, particularly within Broadway Street and Jackson Street. This is due to the high concentration of produce and restaurants within those streets. According to Chinatown Community Development Center's

³ <http://www.sfmta.com/cms/mtep/30StocktonProposals.htm>

Pedestrian Safety Needs Assessment, some intersections can have pedestrian volumes higher than 5000 during weekday afternoons.

Weekday (Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday) 3PM-5PM

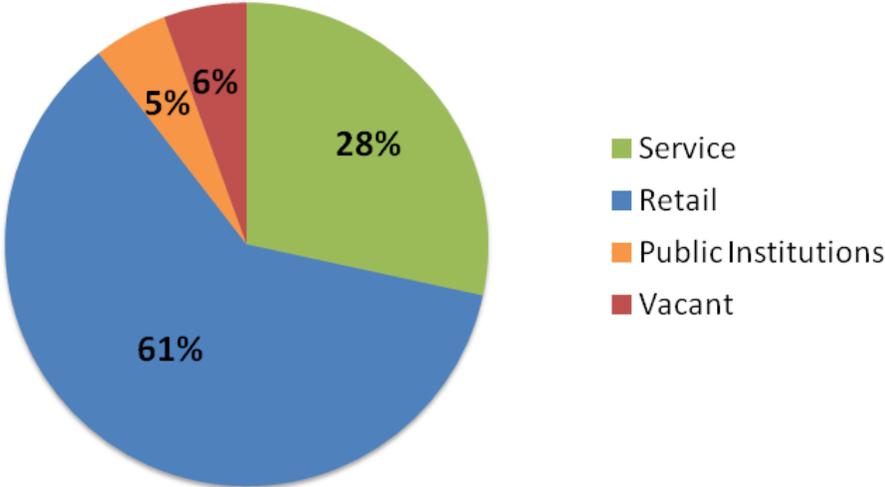


[Source: CCDC]

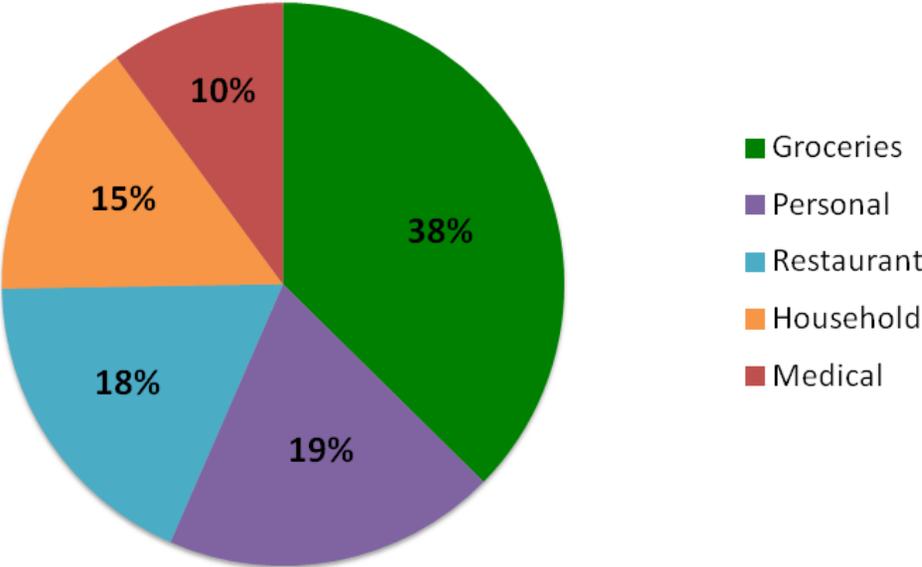
Economic Development

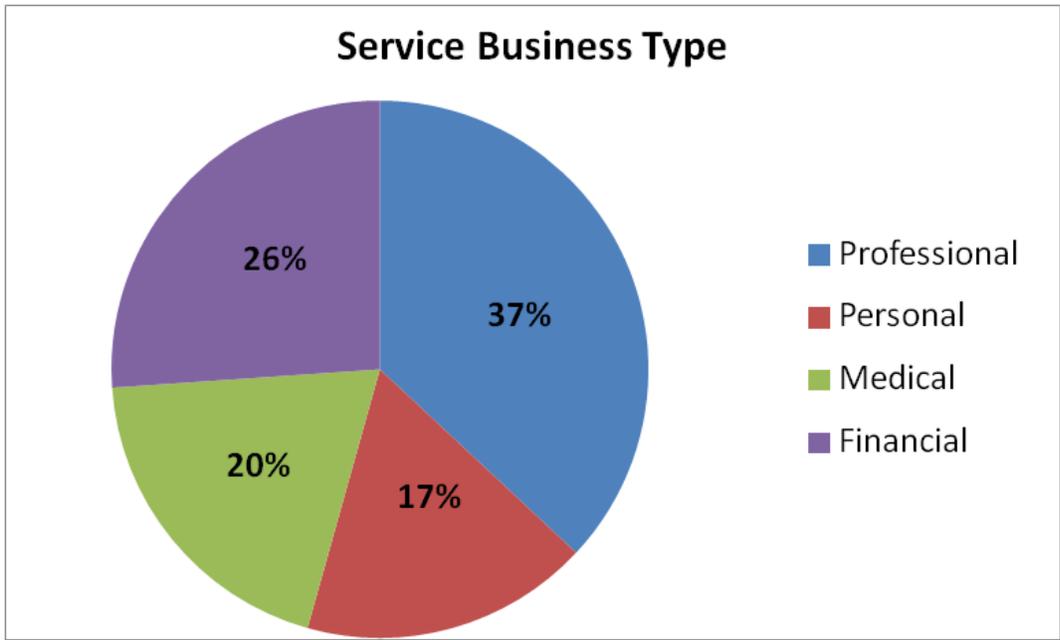
Chinatown's Stockton Street is a very economically lively street. The different stores along Stockton Street make Stockton Street a one stop street for everyone's needs. Through field work and help from Vivian Chang of Chinatown Community Development Center, we were able to gather information about all the businesses located along Stockton Street. 61% of the businesses on Stockton Street are retail store, which includes stores that sells household goods, grocery stores, restaurants, etc. These retail stores are mostly between Columbus Avenue to Washington Street. Service type businesses are the second most type of businesses along Stockton Street. These businesses include travel agents, banks, medical services, etc. These businesses are mostly between Washington Street to Sacramento Street. The other 11% of storefronts on Stockton Street consist of public institutions like schools and religious institutions, and vacant storefronts.

Business Types Along Stockton Street



Retail Store Types





Many residents from San Francisco and the immediate surrounding cities come to Stockton Street to shop. Chinatown's Stockton Street is famous for its cheap, fresh groceries. These grocery stores are really important to the economic life of Stockton Street and Chinatown, but they also bring with them several challenges.

One of the big challenges along Stockton Street is trucks unloading groceries for the grocery stores. Even though parking meters along Stockton Street is reserved for trucks from 9am to 2 pm so trucks can load and unload, trucks usually abuse this power by staying over the maximum 30 minutes allowed. During one of our field studies, our group timed how long each truck parked on Stockton Street. For the time we stayed on Stockton Street, only one truck left. The other eight trucks stayed over the allowed time limit. Besides staying over their allowed time limit, trucks would also unload groceries onto the sidewalks or parking spaces along Stockton Street. While our group was observing the truck unloading groceries, we noticed that one truck unloaded groceries onto a bus stop. This was a problematic sight for us because bus riders weren't able to get on or off the bus safely due to the groceries' boxes and pallets were blocking the bus' entrance. Another safety issue we saw that day was a truck unloading groceries that blocked a fire hydrant. If there was a fire that day, the firefighters would have had a hard time getting to that fire hydrant because of the trucks unloading.



The yellow line highlights where the bus stop is and the red square highlights where a truck has unloaded fresh groceries.



The yellow box highlights a bus rider stepping on a grocery pallet because it was blocking him from getting onto the bus.

The second challenge along Stockton Street would be grocery stores and their storefront displays. Under San Francisco's storefront display regulations, storefront displays can not be more than 2 feet wide but most of the grocery stores along Stockton Street don't comply with this law. During a community workshop, many of the residents in Chinatown felt like they had no room to walk on the sidewalk due to the oversize storefront displays. Many of the residents of Chinatown felt like it was better for them to walk on the street rather than the sidewalk due to the lack of space on the sidewalk. The resident of Chinatown also pointed out that this issue was most prominent between Broadway Street to Jackson Street.



Oversized storefront displays.

Overall, Chinatown's Stockton Street is a very important part of Chinatown's economy. Many residents of Chinatown and around San Francisco rely daily on the fresh groceries that are provided by the groceries stores along Stockton Street. Even though these grocery stores along Stockton Street bring a few challenges, our group feels like grocery stores can be improved upon to improve the economic development of grocery stores and pedestrians' safety.

Public Space



Open space along Stockton Street.

Due to the nature of Stockton Street as a dense, commercial corridor, much of the space available as public space consists of sidewalk area. The sidewalk is not often thought of as public space, but by San Francisco law, it is a required easement with a public right of way and is therefore public space. On Stockton Street, it is also the only “open space” the corridor has, loosely defined.

However, as mentioned, the sidewalk is very congested. This is not only due to a high volume of pedestrian traffic but also due to sprawling storefront displays, trucks loading and unloading deliveries, basement storage chutes, heavily used bus stops, and more. This congestion creates a public safety issue called “pedestrian spillover,” or, in laymen terms, when pedestrians feel so crowded on the sidewalk that they believe it to be faster and more comfortable to walk on the street to get to where they need to go. Through a brief fieldwork study, we gathered these figures on pedestrian and commercial spillover (storefront displays extending past 2 feet in front of the business), using counters and counting for 10 minutes per block between the times of 10am and 11am, on Friday, June 30th, 2012.

Block	West Side of Stockton Street	East Side of Stockton Street
Jackson to Pacific	Pedestrian spillover: 251 counts Commercial spillover: 3 counts	Pedestrian spillover: 55 counts Commercial spillover: 6 counts
Pacific to Broadway	Pedestrian spillover: 65 counts Commercial spillover: 9 counts	Pedestrian spillover: 45 counts Commercial spillover: 4 counts

In recognition of this congestion and public safety issue, efforts have been made by the city and local organizations to construct sidewalk extensions and bulb-outs to accommodate the busy crowd. About 7 feet of the street, on either side, is used for these extensions, which would otherwise be used for parking, commercial loading zones, bus stops, or bulb-outs. However, as seen in the table above, pedestrian and commercial spillover counts are still high. Thus, there seems to be a need for a better balance between all the different users on the sidewalk, and even between the entire range of transit modes available on Stockton Street.

This 7 foot section of the street (14 feet in total) presents an interesting opportunity due to the multiple ways in which it is used. For the purposes of this corridor study, it presents “7 feet of opportunity” to intervene, modify, and improve the built environment of the Stockton Street corridor.

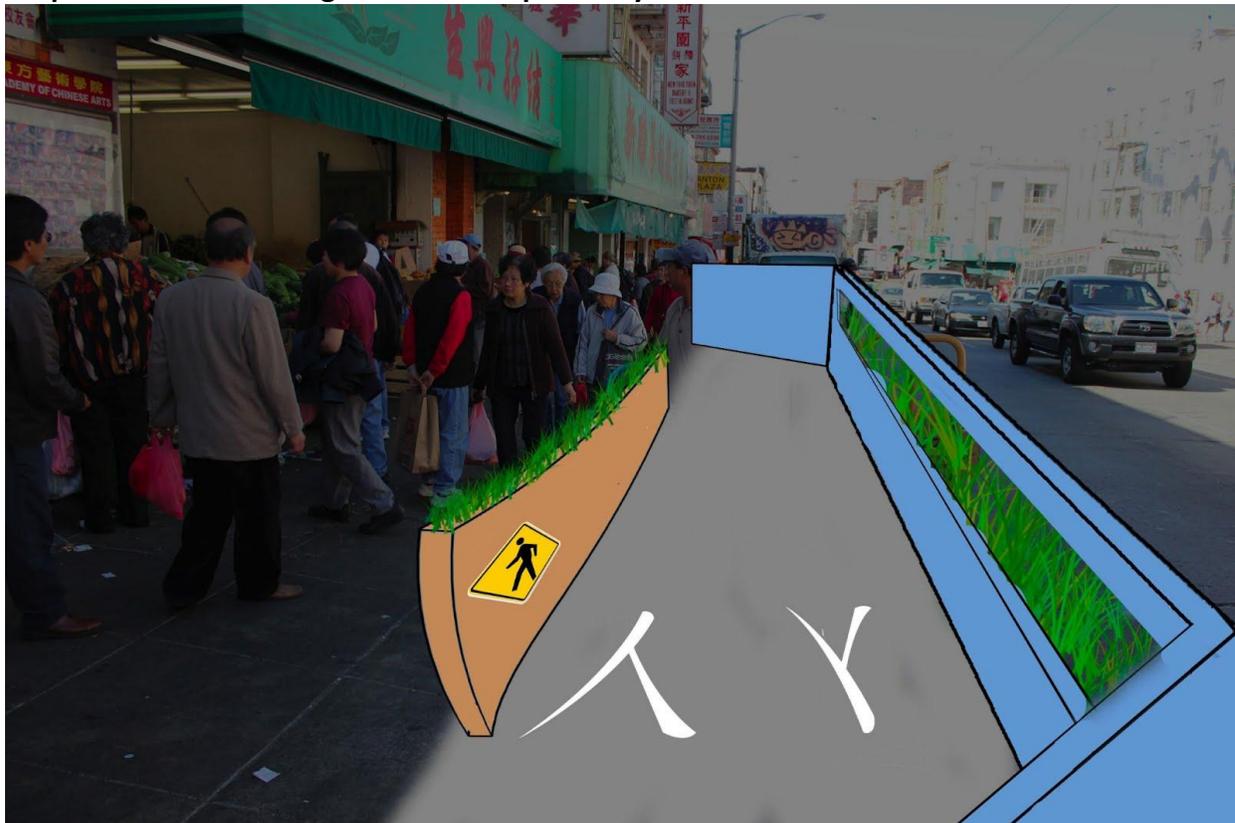
Proposals

Our four proposals are concerned principally with relieving congestion. They consist of:

- Constructing pedestrian expressways
- Renovating bus stops
- Engaging with Businesses to regulate Storefront Display
- Using MUNI bus cameras to enforce commercial loading/unloading regulations

At least for Proposals 1-3, these interventions should be geographically focused on the blocks between Washington and Broadway. This was a geographic area marked out by community residents at our community workshop as an especially crowded, unsafe (for pedestrians) area of Stockton in which interventions were most needed.

Proposal 1 - Constructing Pedestrian Expressways



Prototype of the pedestrian expressway.

The first proposal is to construct pedestrian expressways along Stockton Street utilizing the “7 feet of opportunity” discussed in the section “Existing Conditions: Public Space.” The purpose of this of this intervention is to create an alternative, safe, and exclusive route for pedestrians who are trying to navigate Stockton Street quickly rather than shop. By doing this, we hope to decrease the counts of pedestrian spillover and commercial spillover, which we hope will not only keep pedestrian traffic safe and efficient but also increase the speed at which buses and autos go through Stockton Street (unobstructed by pedestrians in the streets).

The attached design is simply a prototype; our hope is that the final design process will involve multiple community workshops and points of input. There is a tremendous opportunity through this proposal to create, in these expressways, spaces of greenery, public art, and street lighting all up and down Stockton Street. For future study, community and merchant surveys and interviews would be helpful in determining the best location of these pedestrian expressways.

Proposal 2 - Renovating Bus Stops



Prototype of a bus stop after the bus stop renovations.

The second proposal is to renovate bus stops along Stockton Street utilizing the “7 feet of opportunity” discussed in the section “Existing Conditions: Public Space.” The purpose of this of this intervention is to improve the efficiency and safety of the bus loading and unloading process. By doing this, we hope to decrease the counts of commercial spillover, which is often the source of congestion along the sidewalk and also prevents the efficient loading and unloading of passengers on buses.

The attached design is simply a prototype; our hope is that the final design process will involve multiple community workshops and points of input. There is a tremendous opportunity through this proposal to create, in these expressways, spaces of greenery, public art, and street lighting all up and down Stockton Street. For future study, community and merchant surveys and interviews would be helpful in determining the best location of these bus renovations.

Trade-off for Proposals 1 & 2 – Street-side Parking Spaces

A cost for extending the sidewalk for pedestrian expressways and bus stop renovations is the loss of parking spaces along Stockton Street. We understand that there is a real concern that with the loss of parking spaces it will cause a drop in the amount of visitors and shoppers to Stockton Street. Although there are many visitors who do drive, there is also a high amount of people who travel by foot or ride public transportation. Losing a few parking spaces means more space for these pedestrians and bus riders. This seems, from our research, to create a **better balance** between all the different transit needs on Stockton.

Proposal 3 - Engaging with Businesses to Regulate Storefront Display



Kum Luen after the facade improvements.

Our 3rd proposal is to create a better balance of storefront display and pedestrian traffic.

In January 2011, Chinatown Community Development Center successfully conducted a façade improvement plan with the owner of Kum Luen and Best Foods grocery stores. Through a grant provided from San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development, CCDC was able to help improve the storefront of Chinatown’s north side “gates”, which is at the intersection of Broadway Street and Stockton Street. With the help of CCDC, Kum Luen and Best Foods were able to improve their stores’ signage and create carts that comply with city’s regulations. The

success of CCDC’s project inspired our group to envision a similar result with all the storefront displays along Stockton Street.

Our 3rd proposal is a policy that would require all storefront displays along Stockton Street to comply with city’s storefront display regulations. Our policy would be complete in four phases. Attached below is the timeline our group came up with to implement this policy.

Stockton Street Storefront Display Policy Timeline	
Phase 1	San Francisco’s Department of Public Works’ Department Bureaus and Divisions to increase enforcement of the storefront display carts along Stockton Street. All fines from this period of enforcement will go towards Phase 2.
Phase 2	DPW with the help of community organizations will educate business owners about the city’s storefront display carts and a new compliance program. DPW with the help of the community will design new storefront display carts that comply with the city’s storefront display regulations. Business owners then will have a choice to choose to buy these new carts from DPW or to design their own storefront displays that complies with the city’s storefront display regulations. Business owners are already complying with the city’s storefront display regulations would not be required to purchase or design new storefront displays.
Phase 3	DPW will send out inspectors to inspect the business storefronts displays when businesses apply or renew their storefront display permits. DPW would determine if the businesses are complying with the city’s storefront display regulations. DPW would have the right to reject a business’ permit if the business fails to comply with the city’s storefront display regulations.
Phase 4	DPW will inspect each business’ storefront display every other year to ensure the business is complying with the city’s storefront display regulations.

Through this policy, we hope that Stockton Street would be able to become a more pedestrian friendly street. Our main idea behind this policy is that in order to create a better balance, we have to engage the businesses in working with the community. From our research, regulation enforcement only creates temporary change. But from CCDC's model we've seen lasting results.

Proposal 4 - MUNI Bus Camera Parking Enforcement

A major source of congestion is trucks that stay beyond their time limit. There is currently a 30 minute parking maximum for loading trucks on Stockton Street after certain hours – even if you continue to feed the meter. However, many trucks violate the time limit. Some trucks illegally park for long hours and use their truck as a storefront to sell goods. In addition, some trucks are

used as storage spaces for grocery stores. As drivers unload from their truck, the boxes often block the flow of traffic on both the sidewalk and streets.

Why do trucks often stay beyond their allowed time limit? Our group received different answers from merchants and residents. The current penalty for violating the parking time limit is a parking ticket, but Stockton Street lack meter maids ticketing trucks. During a community workshop, many residents expressed their concerns about the lack of parking enforcement on Stockton Street. We also interviewed merchants, who felt that meter maids were not present enough on Stockton Street to discourage violators. In addition, some merchants include parking fines into their budget; this is because some merchants make more money by using trucks as storage. Other reasons trucks stay beyond their allowed time include a lack of storage space and convenience. Some store owners are able to unload early in the morning and leave, while some unload in the afternoon because of delivery schedule.

Our group believes that improvements can only exist if both the law enforcement and merchants are addressed. Enforcement needs to be improved but trucks delivery schedules also need to be coordinated.

Improving Enforcement: cameras on MUNI as surveillance

Recently MUNI started a pilot program where they installed cameras on buses to detect violators that drive on the transit-only lane. Such cameras are installed in the front of MUNI buses, and are constantly filming as the buses drive on its route. The videos are later analyzed by a parking enforcement agent at DPW, and citations are sent out. The computer software has built in time code and GPS that enables agents to efficiently detect violators.



MUNI enforcement camera [source: People Behaving Badly, KRON 4]

If such technology was applied to buses that run through Stockton, parking violators could be cited easier. The use of cameras is a more cost effective and efficient method. MUNI buses are more frequently on Stockton Street than meter maids. In addition, repeated violators should receive multiplied fines rather than a flat continuous fee.

Coordination of Delivery

Due to time constraints, our group could not compile a comprehensive study on trucks' patterns along Stockton Street. Our group recommends a future study regarding trucks' patterns be commissioned. With this study, business owners with the help of community organizations could coordinate a more efficient delivery schedules. Trucks that follow the delivery schedules would receive incentives; an example would be parking permits that allow one hour parking at meters. Like we stated previously, better balance in policy can be achieved by engaging businesses to work with the community.

Implementation

Invest in Neighborhoods Program⁴

From our research we have identified the Invest in Neighborhoods Program as a way to streamline our proposals through the city. The Invest in Neighborhoods Program prioritizes assisting the city's commercial corridors by effectively deploying private and public services to implement plans such as this one. This program, seeking to make up for the dissolution of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency in February, is relatively new but has already contributed to successful redevelopment and renewal efforts around District 10's San Bruno Ave; partnerships between the city and a variety of community-based groups has resulted in lower vacancies and higher sales tax revenues.⁵

Road Repaving and Streets' Safety Program

From our research we have also identified the Road Repaving and Street's Safety Program as a source of funding for our proposals. In this bond, which was passed November 2011, there is a section for Streetscape, Pedestrian, and Bicycle Safety Improvements. The criteria for prioritization of projects relevant to Stockton Street is as follows: community approved plans, commercial corridor classification, transit corridors, and pedestrian high-injury corridors. That is 4 out of the 8 criteria of prioritization, and 4 of the top 5 criteria.⁶

For the future, it would be worth exploring unifying the many community approved (or at least community-involving) plans that have already been conducted for Stockton Street. The corridor is by no means ignored or excluded from city planning efforts by all sectors, but dramatic changes of comprehensive plans still have yet to materialize. With the construction of the Central T Subway, SPUR has worked with CCDC to conduct community workshops to reenvision Stockton Street.⁷ The CHS Consulting group has also worked on its own Stockton Street Enhancement Project, which was funded by a MTC Livable Communities grant.⁸ These projects, along with other attempts at improving Stockton Street like the park-and-ride program for Chinatown and temporary fences used to enclose the sidewalk space, need to be unified and comprehensively studied in order to evaluate what has worked and what hasn't for the community.

⁴ <http://www.oewd.org/media/docs/Invest%20in%20Neighborhoods%20Overview%20-%20March%202012.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.sfmayor.org/index.aspx?page=705>

⁶ <http://sfdpw.org/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=2299>

⁷ <http://www.spur.org/blog/2012-04-09/creating-community-vision-stockton-street>

⁸ <http://www.chsconsulting.net/projects/project9.html>

However, as of now, there are only a few months left before the final list of streets to be funded through this bond will be reviewed by the Board of Supervisors. Even if the plan is not fully formed, and not all plans will be fully studied, we recommend that, at least, it is brought to the city's attention that Stockton Street needs comprehensive planning to make adjustments to bring a better balance between the diverse uses of the street, especially with the coming Central T Subway line.

Conclusion

Through this short report and study, we hope that we have contributed to meeting the challenge of Stockton Street - the complexity of the issues it faces and the diversity of the stakeholders involved (as well as their needs). Many studies have already been conducted, but we think, that from our research, we've produced some effective proposals for balancing all the different needs of this part of the greater Chinatown community.