

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 5, 2003  
TO: Manito Velasco, DPT  
FROM: John Billovits, Planning Dept.  
CC: ISCOTT Members  
RE: June 12<sup>th</sup> ISCOTT Mtg., Right Turn Prohibition from Market St.  
onto  
Freeway Touchdown

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Hello Manito,

Per your request, We've put together the following points summarizing some of the background and issues related to the importance of the above item at ISCOTT next week. I hope this is helpful. I thought it would be useful to cc it to other ISCOTT members that might be interested.

### **Why the Planning Department?**

The Planning Department has taken the lead on this issue and related items in the area as part of an ongoing comprehensive community and interagency planning effort.

The pending freeway touchdown at Market Street and Octavia Boulevard is at the center of the Market & Octavia Neighborhood Plan, part of the Department's Better Neighborhoods Program. The Plan is the product of three years of intensive community planning work seeking to promote housing and good mixed-use urban development that is appropriately transit and pedestrian-oriented for this central city location. It was in response to concerns over safety and livability on behalf of the community, staff, and our transportation and urban design consultants that the Department anticipated conflicts with the early touchdown design and took the initiative to address the problems.

### **City agencies and Caltrans unanimously agreed to prohibit right turn in early 2001.**

More than two years ago, the Planning Department facilitated an interagency discussion and decision-making process to engage Caltrans on the freeway touchdown design in conjunction with the Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Muni, DPT, DPW, SFCTA, and urban design and transportation consultants. The prohibition of a right turn movement from Market Street onto the onramp was unanimously agreed upon by City staff as the top safety priority

in January 2001. In the following early months of 2001, Caltrans agreed to prohibit this movement and designed it out of the structure - settling the issue.

A prohibition on right turns here has been assumed and carried forward ever since, not only in the Market & Octavia Plan draft, but in the expectations of the hundreds of participating members of the public, neighborhood groups, advocacy organizations and various public agencies.

At the suggestion of DPT staff, we are providing the following points outlining some of the issues supporting the right turn prohibition at this unusual location.

- *Published plan, history of community process and understanding.* The elimination of the right turn has been published in the city's Market & Octavia Better Neighborhoods Plan. This lengthy community process, in addition to interagency communication, has had this as a fundamental understanding for at least two years. Because this has been considered a settled issue, changing this decision would necessitate going back out to the public to change the project, introducing delay.
- *Caltrans design and understanding.* Potential project delay to introduce right turn. Caltrans has designed the freeway touchdown to *not* accommodate a right turn from Market Street. Earlier designs had incorporated such a movement but were very problematic from a pedestrian safety, bicycle safety, and urban design standpoint, and were eliminated, at the unified request of the City. At this point Caltrans is neither expecting nor desirous of re-introducing a right turn from Market Street onto the freeway, and doing so would introduce additional delay to the project.
- *Bicycle safety.* Banning the right turn is necessary to avoid creating significant negative conflicts for bicycle traffic: There are currently bike lanes on Market Street and a regular flow of cyclists; Market Street is the most important and heavily used street for bicycle transportation in the city. As the freeway touchdown is on a sloping section of Market Street, cyclists are coming downhill with significant momentum; introducing a turning and merging conflict across this cyclist momentum would produce dramatic conflicts more serious in nature than average turning conflicts. The current movement on Market at Duboce of motor vehicle traffic merging across bicycle traffic and turning toward the freeway is a better location (being at the crest of a hill, rather on the down-slope) for such movements.
- *Pedestrian Safety and Convenience.* As Market Street is San Francisco's primary pedestrian street and this intersection is the heart of the Market & Octavia Better Neighborhoods Plan area, ensuring pedestrian priority and safety is most important. This area indeed has significant pedestrian traffic, which will only increase with the redevelopment of former freeway parcels with housing, retail and other uses. Further, there are many community facilities in the area which are frequented by more at-risk pedestrians, such as elderly and disabled persons. Prohibiting the

right turn from Market Street will be an essential step in keeping this heavily trafficked intersection safe for pedestrians, as the movement along Market is the most important for those on foot. Allowing the right turn onto the freeway would likely also require a separate arrow signal phase which would prohibit pedestrians from crossing the street, adding greater inconvenience for those on foot. The initial Caltrans plans for allowing the right turn led to the conclusion that the related conflicts would necessitate either the prohibition of pedestrian access on Market Street (and unacceptable proposition) or the elimination of the right turn (which was preferred by all parties). Narrowing the intersection, roadway cross-sections, and pedestrian crossings in all directions is critical to making the complex intersection pedestrian-friendly and prevent traffic movements from overwhelming the character of this important urban center.

- *Simplifying complex intersection.* An interface of a freeway with city streets is very difficult to make pedestrian-friendly; mitigation and elimination of avoidable conflicts of traffic with the surrounding urban activity is critical. This is a complex intersection that will have heavy traffic, and simplifying this intersection by prohibiting right turns will be necessary to make the area appropriate as the heart of a pedestrian-oriented fine-grained neighborhood.
- *Narrowing sidewalk, impact on plaza.* Allowing the right turn would require cutting back the sidewalk (a politically very unpopular proposition) to create a right-turn lane necessary to accommodate the high volumes of traffic that would be attracted to this freeway access instead of using the existing Duboce connection. Narrowing the sidewalk would be a significant degradation of the planned triangular plaza at the intersection of Elgin Park and Market Street (included both as part of the Octavia Boulevard project and included in the Better Neighborhoods Plan), on the west side of the freeway touchdown, and also require an offset crosswalk.
- *Impact on transit.* Market Street is a critical Transit Preferential Street (designated so in the General Plan). The heavily-used F-line streetcar uses this portion of Market, but there is no dedicated transit-only diamond lane. Allowing the right turn onto the freeway would encourage the use of Market as a freeway access route (especially diverting traffic currently turning right at Duboce) and would cause significant queues near the on-ramp and delays to transit (and other modes).
- *Policies discouraging auto traffic on Market Street.* There are long-standing city policies discouraging looking to Market Street as a primary traffic route, especially traffic heading eastbound toward downtown. Because a right-turn here would only be two blocks past the existing right-turn at Duboce to access the freeway, it would not serve any additional traffic on Market but rather would divert and encourage *more* freeway-bound traffic *onto* Market Street (which would be attracted from using Duboce due to perceived greater convenience).

- *Right turn from Market is Unnecessary.* The replacement freeway and Boulevard were charged with ensuring a level of service comparable to the previous structure and configuration. This has been achieved without the right turn and no such freeway access from Market Street existed in the prior configuration.
- *Enforceability by Design.* The only concern we have heard raised against prohibiting the right turn is the notion that the prohibition would be hard to enforce because motorists would have the presumption of being able to make the right turn. As with any prohibited traffic movements, clear signage will be provided indicating the prohibition of this movement, both at the freeway touchdown and further westward on Market indicating to eastbound freeway traffic that it should continue to use Duboce for freeway access. As an additional physical safeguard, DPT, in consultation with the Planning Department and concerned members of the public, have begun designing a small raised median between the bicycle lane and the travel lane that would create a physical barrier to prevent cars from turning right onto the on-ramp. It might be possible for the median itself to have signage indicating the prohibition on right turns. Motorists determined to make this illegal right turn onto the freeway would have to not only ignore the clear signage, but make the difficult maneuver around (or over) the raised median and make a very sharp turn onto the freeway, whose geometry has been designed not to easily accommodate such a movement; these movements seem highly unlikely.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this personally in advance of the ISCOTT meeting, feel free to call John Billovits at 558-6390. You can see more on our plan at [www.betterneighborhoods.org](http://www.betterneighborhoods.org).