

SAN FRANCISCO
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DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS

USES OF THE GREAT HIGHWAY AND JFK DRIVE

The Way It Is Now

The Great Highway is a four-lane public roadway that runs along Ocean Beach from Lincoln Way to Skyline Boulevard. John F. Kennedy Drive (“JFK Drive”) is a public street that runs east to west within Golden Gate Park. The City has provided for the use of portions of these two street areas as open space for recreational purposes and allowed private motor vehicles only under certain circumstances or at certain times:

- In April 2020, the City temporarily restricted private motor vehicles on weekends and holidays from the Great Highway, reserving it as open space for pedestrians, bicyclists, those using wheelchairs, and all other forms of recreation. During weekdays other than holidays, the Great Highway is open in both directions to private motor vehicle traffic.
- In April 2022, the Board of Supervisors adopted an ordinance that closed portions of JFK Drive and certain connector streets seven days a week, reserving the streets as open space for pedestrians, bicyclists, those using wheelchairs, and all other forms of recreation. The closures do not apply to emergency vehicles, official government vehicles performing government business, intra-park transit shuttle buses and similar vehicles used to transport persons, and vehicles making deliveries to the de Young Museum.

The San Francisco Recreation and Park Department (“Rec Park”) manages the City’s public parks and recreation spaces, including certain streets within or along the parks such as the Great Highway and JFK Drive. The San Francisco Department of Public Works (“Public Works”) currently maintains the City’s other streets and sidewalks, but that function will transfer to a new Sanitation and Streets Department in October 2022.

To address environmental impacts of sea level rise and improve coastal access, the City is developing plans to close the Great Highway between Sloat Boulevard and Skyline Boulevard to vehicles seven days a week, reserving that area as open space. The City would reroute vehicle traffic to the other side of the San Francisco Zoo along Skyline and Sloat Boulevards.

The Proposal

The proposed ordinance would remove the use of the Great Highway as open space for recreational purposes on weekends and holidays, by requiring private motor vehicle traffic in both directions at all times.

As to the portions of JFK Drive and connector streets in Golden Gate Park reserved as open space for recreational purposes, the proposed ordinance would repeal the Board of Supervisors ordinance and require the City to allow private motor vehicles to use those streets at all times, except on Sundays, Saturdays from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. between April and September, and holidays.

For both the Great Highway and JFK Drive along with the other affected streets in Golden Gate Park, the City could only temporarily restrict private motor vehicles to respond to emergencies; for construction, maintenance, or street repairs; or for permitted parades, celebrations, concerts, community events, or similar activities. The proposed ordinance would not allow the City to close the Great Highway between Sloat and Skyline Boulevards as planned.

The ordinance also would require Public Works to take over management of the Great Highway from Rec Park.