

Disabilities Advocates Launch Campaign to End Sidewalk Parking

by Matthew Roth, SF Streets blog

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The [Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#), the [Independent Living Resource Center](#) and the [Senior Action Network](#) launched a new campaign with [Supervisor Carmen Chu](#) today to draw attention to illegal sidewalk parking, which is rampant in District 4. [Sidewalks are for Everyone \(SAFE\)](#) kicked it off with a walking tour of the Sunset, pointing out the numerous dangers not necessarily obvious to able pedestrians, let alone vehicle owners.

Winifred Downing of the [California Council of the Blind](#) said she has on several occasions suffered head injuries by running face-first into objects sticking out of the bed of trucks. And Amber DiPietra of Lighthouse explained her travails:

"If a car is blocking a sidewalk, I do hope that what people understand is it's not just an inconvenience, but it sets into motion a chain of events. I've missed my bus because a car was blocking my path; I had to wait in the dark in the cold in an unfamiliar neighborhood simply because I couldn't approach the bus stop. I've had to dart out into the street and I was even hit by a taxi because a car was blocking my path."

SAFE campaign advocates will spend the next few months meeting with community organizations in the Sunset to raise awareness among neighbors. Rather than focus on punitive measures, SAFE hopes outreach and education will change the neighborhood.

On the sidewalk and in front of a hydrant on 19th Avenue They will have their work cut out for them. SFPD Sergeant Steve Quon of the Taraval Station said he's not inclined to enforce sidewalk parking, except in instances where there are significant complaints.



"There are so many cars on the sidewalk on 19th Avenue, if we cited one, we'd have to cite all of them. That's a lot of citations. There's not a lot of pedestrian traffic on 19th. As you can see, there's nobody on it right now."

When it was suggested he's missing out on a lot of fine revenue, he replied:

"We don't look at it that way. We can't look at it from a money factor, because it doesn't really go into our pockets. We don't get a percentage or anything."

SFMTA spokesman Judson True assured Streetsblog San Francisco managers at the Department of Parking and Traffic (DPT) have told their employees to enforce any instance of sidewalk parking they encounter.

When asked why the walking tour had seen so many illegally parked cars on the sidewalk, Supervisor Chu cited the limited enforcement capability of DPT.

"Unfortunately as a city we don't have nearly enough DPT officers to provide adequate coverage."



Should the SAFE approach not get results, San Francisco advocates might take cues from Los Angeles, where the city has been sued under the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) (ADA) to the tune of \$1 billion for a pattern of failed enforcement of sidewalk parking ([PDF](#)).

UCLA Professor of Urban Planning Donald Shoup, who plans to testify in favor of the lawsuit, argues that "parking on the sidewalks has spread as predicted by the ["broken windows"](#) theory: if everyone can see that the city doesn't ticket cars on the sidewalks in their neighborhood, they may be tempted to park on the sidewalk whenever the need arises. That has certainly happened in LA."

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