Resolution urging the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency to make all
efforts to preserve the historic character of the Van Ness Corridor through reuse as
well as replication of the Van Ness Avenue historic streetlamps.

WHEREAS, The over 200 historic trolley poles and streetlamps that run the length of
Van Ness Avenue were constructed in preparation for the 1915 Panama Pacific International
Exposition and moved in 1936 for a Works Progress Administration (WPA) road-widening
project to inaugurate the Golden Gate Bridge; and

WHEREAS, The graceful ironwork brackets and lamps that have lined Van Ness
Avenue since the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge are known as the “Ribbon of Light” and
the “geographic marker” that defines the two miles of Highway 101 from Market Street to
North Point Street; and

WHEREAS, 33 of the trolley poles and streetlamps are located on streets within the
Article 10 Civic Center Historic District (Fell Street to Golden Gate Avenue) and 16 of these
are located within the Civic Center National Historic Landmark District (between Grove and
McAllister); and

WHEREAS, An architectural survey conducted by San Francisco Heritage in 1982
rated the Van Ness Avenue trolley poles and streetlamps “level B (major importance)”; and

WHEREAS, In conjunction with the proposed Van Ness Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
Project, a 2009 study by the San Francisco Department of Public Works (Public Works)
concluded that the 1914 Beaux Arts trolley poles and streetlamps are not eligible historic
resources primarily because the concrete poles lacked sufficient historical and structural
integrity; and
WHEREAS, Despite the 2009 Public Works report’s conclusion that the trolley poles and streetlamps are not historic, the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission added the “Van Ness Avenue Trolley Poles and Light Standards” to the Planning Department’s Landmark Designation Work Program for future consideration as a San Francisco City Landmark on March 29, 2011, with nearly all research having been completed for the nomination; and

WHEREAS, The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) presentations in public outreach materials and at public information meetings for the Van Ness BRT Project Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), did not sufficiently indicate plans for destruction of the trolley poles, lamps, and brackets; and

WHEREAS, The feasibility of reusing the cast iron light standards and bases with compatible replacement poles has not been evaluated as part of the environmental review process for the Van Ness BRT Project; and

WHEREAS, SFMTA is currently developing a treatment plan for retention as well as replication of four of the historic trolley poles, lamps, and brackets situated within the Civic Center National Historic Landmark District, the remaining over 200 lamps on the 27 blocks of Van Ness Avenue outside of the Civic Center are slated for removal as early as Fall 2016; and

WHEREAS, A group of civic leaders, neighborhood associations, and preservationists, including San Francisco Beautiful, San Francisco Heritage, and the Victorian Alliance of San Francisco have formed the Coalition to Save the Historic Streetlamps of Van Ness Avenue (“Coalition”); and
WHEREAS, The Van Ness Avenue Historic Streetlamps have been nominated to the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s 2016 list of “America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places” to be nationally announced in October 2016; and

WHEREAS, Reuse as well as replication of the Van Ness Avenue Historic Streetlamps would provide the architectural framework and historical continuity for new development along the entire Van Ness Corridor, and celebrate civic pride to unite old and new San Francisco; and

WHEREAS, The City has a policy and practice of retaining or replicating historic streetlamps where appropriate, including examples on Market Street, the Golden Triangle, Octavia Boulevard, Divisadero Street, Dolores Street, Lower Fillmore, and The Embarcadero; and

WHEREAS, The SFMTA Van Ness Improvement staff is currently conducting a reassessment of whether reusing existing components on new poles is feasible, with consideration of project standards and specifications, due to be complete in September 2016; and

WHEREAS, On August 16, 2016, the SFMTA Board of Directors approved a contract with Walsh Construction for construction phase of the Van Ness Corridor project that could include demolition or other work that might preclude or impede the reuse of the streetlamps and fittings; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors joins the Coalition in calling for SFMTA to make all efforts to preserve the historic character of the Van Ness Corridor through reuse as well as replication of the Van Ness Avenue Historic Streetlamps; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors calls on SFMTA to fully explore the costs and technical feasibility of reuse as well as replication of the Van
Ness Avenue Historic Streetlamps, including feasibility of retaining the cast iron fittings and
lamps mounted on compatible replacement poles; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors calls on SFMTA
to halt any actions that would endanger the Van Ness Avenue Historic Streetlamps before any
requisite studies and reviews have been completed; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors directs the Clerk
of the Board to transmit this resolution to the SFMTA Board of Directors and SFMTA upon
final passage.
Resolution urging the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency to make all efforts to preserve the historic character of the Van Ness Corridor through reuse as well as replication of the Van Ness Avenue historic streetlamps.

September 20, 2016 Board of Supervisors - AMENDED, AN AMENDMENT OF THE WHOLE BEARING SAME TITLE
Ayes: 11 - Avalos, Breed, Campos, Cohen, Farrell, Kim, Mar, Peskin, Tang, Wiener and Yee

September 20, 2016 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED AS AMENDED
Ayes: 11 - Avalos, Breed, Campos, Cohen, Farrell, Kim, Mar, Peskin, Tang, Wiener and Yee

File No. 160993

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED AS AMENDED on 9/20/2016 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

Unsigned

Mayor

9/30/16

Date Approved

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution, not being signed by the Mayor within the time limit as set forth in Section 3.103 of the Charter, or time waived pursuant to Board Rule 2.14.2, became effective without his approval in accordance with the provision of said Section 3.103 of the Charter or Board Rule 2.14.2.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

9/30/16