Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project

Report from the LightHouse for the Blind and
San Francisco Mayor's Office on Disability

Prepared by Rachel Lanzerotti, Consultant
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I. BLVPP EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project (BLVPP) is the first community research project of its kind. Never before has there been a formal assessment among people who are blind and low vision of their priorities for improving and increasing access to public services in San Francisco. In related literature, few assessments go beyond issues of medical care and rehabilitation. This study is the first to address architectural and programmatic access to government departments and services. The project was the result of collaboration between LightHouse for the Blind and the San Francisco Mayor's Office on Disability in 2006 and 2007. Results of a telephone survey, leadership polls, and multiple focus groups show that accessible public transportation, travel, and public pathways are of greatest concern to people who are blind and low vision in San Francisco.

Problems with public transit and public pathways keep blind and low vision residents from being able to navigate San Francisco with safety and convenience. Significantly, however, the community did not call for major policy changes or new technological fixes to redress their concerns. Instead, most of their recommendations involved enforcing compliance with existing laws and regulations and wider application of existing technologies.

Key Findings:

- Sixty percent (60.6%) of blind survey respondents, and one-third (32.8%) of low vision respondents frequently encounter intrusions into the path of travel. The most common obstacles were sidewalks in poor condition, street furniture and signs, construction sites and scaffolding, protruding steps and street trees, and vehicles blocking the sidewalk.
- Almost all blind and low vision participants reported difficulties with citywide navigation. More than sixty percent (61.4%) of respondents would find audible signals at crosswalks the most helpful solution to address barriers to citywide navigation.
- Although seventy-three percent (72.9%) of blind and low vision transit riders would find "talking" buses and MUNI trains most useful for accessible transit, MUNI bus drivers frequently fail to use the automated Digital Voice Announcement System (DVAS). Nor are operators calling out the stops in lieu of using the DVAS, as required.
- Disabled access seats on MUNI are rarely available as intended, and drivers do not consistently ask other riders to yield the seats.
- Sixty-four percent (63.6%) of blind and low vision survey respondents were not aware that they have the right to ask staff of city programs to provide information in alternative formats.
- Sixty-six percent (66.2%) of respondents said they did not know they could call the Mayor's Office on Disability to complain about city services.

Key Recommendations:

- Enforce laws and policies about keeping public pathways clear;
- Increase responsiveness of the Department of Public Works and Department of Parking and Traffic to complaints;
- Install standardized, accessible pedestrian signals citywide;
- Expand and enforce the use of audible announcements on public transit vehicles and at transit stops;
- Improve signage and other navigation aids at transit stops and stations;
- Address transit operators' behavior and adherence to regulations;
- Upgrade customer service to people who are blind and low vision;
- Train city employees about how to assist people with disabilities;
- Provide informational materials in a variety of alternative formats; and
- Educate people who are blind and low vision about their rights and grievance procedures.

Additional Findings and Recommendations:

As the first study of its kind, the BLVPP addressed the most urgent priorities and needs of people who are blind and low vision. Participants in the survey and focus groups also had the following recommendations for increased access in other areas of city services:

- Voting: Provide voting materials in alternative formats, training on accessible voting machines, and increased visibility for polling place signage.
- Public Art: Provide audio description of public art exhibits where the art is located. Provide flexibility in alternative formats.
- Public Safety and Emergencies: Provide automatic audio announcements or staff assistance for blind or low vision people during emergency building evacuations.

Many areas for further investigation remain. These areas relate to public safety, arts and recreation, housing, health and social services, and other administrative services. Based on the prioritization by survey respondents, the BLVPP Steering Committee recommends that the City undertake additional blind and low vision community assessment projects, first focusing on access to public health and social services.

II. BACKGROUND AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In 2006-2007, the LightHouse for the Blind and the San Francisco Mayor's Office on Disability collaborated to conduct the Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project (BLVPP). The LightHouse for the Blind engaged the services of Rachel Lanzerotti, Project Management and Research Consultant, to manage the project and The Henne Group, a professional research firm, to conduct a telephone survey.

The project's goal was to document and assess priorities for increasing access to city services and thus improve aspects of urban livability for people who are blind and low vision in San Francisco.

To reach that goal, the project intended to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods to answer the following, initial questions:

- What is the preferred mode of way-finding in blind and low vision (BLV) communities?
- What features and approaches are best for BLV communities in an emergency or disaster?
- What are the current and future preferred modes of voting for BLV communities?
- What are the best means to make public art (in museums and the public right-of-way) accessible to people with visual disabilities?
- What is the preferred means to receive information about City services, benefits and activities for BLV communities?
- What is the level of knowledge of disability rights in BLV communities?

A primary goal of the project was to get a sense of relative urgency about what city services community members want addressed to increase and improve access. The project framework divided city services into six broad areas: public housing, public health and social services, public paths and travel, public safety and emergency services, arts and recreation, and administrative services and civic participation.

Each of these areas of city services is a legitimate area for investigation in its own right. As the project developed, it focused on the areas that community members indicated were highest priorities: public transportation, travel, and pathways.

Prioritization of City Services

When surveyed about their top priority among six areas for San Francisco to improve or increase access for people who are blind or low vision, the greatest proportion of survey respondents chose public transportation, travel, and pathways, and respondents also ranked this area as the most important for improved access.

The survey asked respondents to rank the importance of improving accessibility for people who are blind or low vision in each of six areas of San Francisco city services on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 meaning not at all important and 7 meaning extremely important. ***City services in the area of Transportation, Travel, and Pathways received the highest importance ranking of 6.28****.* Responses are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Areas for Improvement
(Mean score on a scale of 1 to 7)

Area of City Services	**Mean Score (1 to 7)**
Transportation, travel, and pathways (*n* = 219)	6.28
Public safety and emergency services (*n* = 206)	6.12
Public health and social services (*n* = 200)	5.90
Housing (*n* = 206)	5.88
Arts and recreation (*n* = 210)	5.79
Administrative services (*n* = 213)	5.72

The scores indicate that all six areas were of high importance to the respondents, with none falling below a mean ranking of 5.7 out of 7. However, there is some differentiation in the rankings.

Next, respondents were asked to select the one area that was their top priority for the City of San Francisco to improve and increase access for people who are blind or low vision. ***The greatest proportion, forty-two percent of respondents (41.7%) selected "Transportation, travel, and pathways" as their top priority.*** The proportions of respondents who selected each area are presented in Table 2 on the following page.

Table 2: Top Priority Area
(*n* = 228)

Area of City Services	% of Respondents
Transportation, travel, and pathways	41.7%
Public health and social services	18.0%
Housing	12.3%
Public safety and emergency services	11.0%
Arts and recreation	6.6%
Administrative services	4.4%
Other/No Opinion/Decline to State	6.1%

Those who selected public transportation, travel, and pathways as their top priority were most likely to do so because they use these services most frequently.

The body of the report therefore presents specific recommendations related to the areas of public pathways and public transit. The report presents briefer summaries of findings in other areas and summarizes recommendations related to ubiquitous issues of customer service and communications, which turned up as concerns related to all areas of city services.

Acknowledgments and Project Staff

Our gratitude goes to all community members who shared their personal experiences and opinions with us by participating in the leadership polls, focus groups, or telephone survey.

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Steering Committee Members:

Lighthouse for the Blind

Anita Shafer Aaron, *Executive Director*

George Clark, *Chief Development Officer*

Jessica Lorenz, *Public Advocacy and Information Coordinator*

San Francisco Mayor's Office on Disability

Susan Mizner, *Director*

Kenneth Stein, *Program Administrator*

Project Management and Research Consultant

Rachel Lanzerotti

Telephone Surveyors

The Henne Group

Facilitators, Interpreters and Notetakers

Victoria and William Brucker, Bruckner Consultants, LLC, Vanessa Corey, Diane Binay Gregorio, Isabel Gutierrez, Nicole Hsiang, Amy Jamgochian, Marta Martinez, Michael J. Wong Consulting

For More Information:

The LightHouse for the Blind
214 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 431-1481
TTY: 415-431-4572
www.lighthouse-sf.org

San Francisco Mayor's Office on Disability
401 Van Ness Avenue, Room 300
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 554-6789
TTY: (415) 554-6799
www.sfgov.org/mod

III. PROJECT REPORT

1. Introduction and Overview

People who are blind and low vision tell numerous stories, often with patient humor, about the indignities and dangers they find in navigating city life. These include stories about using public services such as transportation, getting around on city streets, voting, and safety in emergencies. People who are blind and low vision also have many creative ideas and recommendations about how to make San Francisco a more accessible and livable city.

The LightHouse for the Blind and the Mayor's Office on Disability sought to collect and assess these experiences and ideas so they might be transformed into concrete changes to improve San Francisco city services and thus ensure the civil rights of people who are blind and low vision. The BLVPP Steering Committee wanted to know where severe access problems have occurred and better ways to address them.

Throughout the project, several points consistently informed our methodological decisions. First, the project sought the direct experience of people who are blind and low vision regarding their interaction with city services in San Francisco. Second, it sought to gauge community priorities for increasing and improving city services without asking participants to make exclusionary choices among them, as they have a right to them all. Third, the project endeavored to make a distinction between participants' difficulties with access to city services and access in other areas that may affect livability but that would be outside the scope of city accountability for disability access.

Previous research in this area is limited. Few assessments of the needs of blind and low vision people go beyond issues of medical care and rehabilitation. Moreover, few address architectural and programmatic access to public departments and services from the perspective of people who are blind and low vision. Finally, census and other demographic data sources are limited and thus do not adequately help describe the blind and low vision population in San Francisco. The Project sought to address these information gaps as it strove to document the characteristics and priorities of San Franciscans who are blind and low vision.

A steering committee of management staff from the LightHouse for the Blind and the Mayor's Office on Disability, with consultant Rachel Lanzerotti, planned and implemented the Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project over the course of a year. Initially, the BLVPP Steering Committee and consultant reviewed literature and demographic data and held formative "leadership poll" discussions with groups of community leaders. Next, we surveyed blind and

low vision adults in San Francisco by telephone about their priorities related to city services. To provide context and texture, the project concluded with two large community meetings that incorporated focus group discussions and a disability rights training by the Mayor's Office of Disability. We held additional focus groups with people who are deaf-blind, people whose primary language is Spanish, and blind and low vision youth. (See Section IV for full details of the project methodology and participant characteristics. See Appendices for protocols.)

Our study found that the top priorities for the City of San Francisco to improve and increase access for people who are blind and low vision are public transportation, travel, and public pathways. Participants reported numerous problems with public transit and public pathways that keep them from being able to move around the city with safety and convenience. According to the testimonies of participants, existing laws and regulations related to these areas are consistently disregarded. The Project also gathered community input about improving other areas of city services, such as public safety protocols, access to public art, and voting processes.

Finally, the project polled respondents on what they thought San Francisco should do to improve services in the priority areas. Participants weighed in on technological solutions related to navigating public services and city streets. They strongly preferred auditory technologies in combination with tactile guide systems, improved signage, and personal assistance. Having city workers provide appropriate customer service and assistance was a recommendation that cut across city departments. ***Interestingly, most of the solutions proposed by those affected would not require new technological fixes or dramatic policy changes. Rather, the community urged better staff education and enforcing compliance with existing regulations.***

Summary reports on the information collected at each stage of the project can be found in the Appendices. The body of the report organizes key findings according to the priority areas community participants identified. In each chapter, the existing laws, rules or regulations are presented, followed by the experience of study participants and their suggestions for improvements. The report concludes with a compilation of recommendations. The recommendations are based in the optimism and creativity of our community members and should provide guidance and direction to city policymakers. Our hope is that the Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project may inform changes not only in San Francisco but also in the larger field of community livability, accessibility, and disability rights.

2. Public Pathways

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires access to the public right-of-way for people with disabilities. The City of San Francisco Department of Public Works, Department of Parking and Traffic, Cal Trans, and the California Building Code have in place a number of policies and regulations to ensure that persons with disabilities have full and unimpeded access to all city streets and sidewalks. Yet people who are blind and low vision described numerous obstacles that consistently and frequently violate these legal regulations. ***Findings from this study show that the City of San Francisco is not maintaining a clear path of travel in the public right-of-way for people who are blind and low vision.*** Two key recommendations emerged in this area:

- Enforce policies that are designed to keep public pathways clear
- Install standardized Audible (or Accessible) Pedestrian Signals (APS) citywide.

Enforce Policies to Keep Public Pathways Clear

Department of Public Works regulations are designed to ensure a safe and accessible path of travel for all pedestrians. Keeping sidewalks clear of obstacles and hazards is a legal requirement. Details about DPW regulations related to access for people who are blind and low vision are included in the accompanying text box. ***Despite existing DPW regulations, three-fifths (60.6%) of blind respondents and one-third (32.8%) of low vision respondents frequently encounter intrusions into the path of travel.***

What DPW Regulations Require:

- A minimum 48" wide path-of-travel, with short stretches that can be as narrow as 36" for such obstacles as posts or poles;
- Clear barriers to dangers from construction sites on the street and sidewalk, including scaffolding and trenches, along with safe, alternate paths of travel;
- Limits on where street furniture and signs can be placed in the public right-of-way. These obstacles must be formally permitted with DPW and leave a clear, level path of travel at least 48" wide;
- No overhangs lower than 80";
- Cane-detectable rails around any objects that protrude greater than 4" or other temporary obstacles; and
- No un-barricaded, unexpected, hazardous drops.

People who are blind and low vision reported that they are not able to safely use the San Francisco public right-of-way due to the following types of dangers:

- Sidewalks that are broken and in poor condition;
- Street furniture and signs, such as café or restaurant tables and chairs and signboards on the sidewalks;

- Construction sites and scaffolding;
- Protruding steps and street trees;
- Cars and motorcycles blocking the sidewalk; and
- Other obstacles.

Sidewalk Condition

Community participants reported the dangers of sidewalks in poor condition: uneven pavement, potholes, dips in the street, holes, and broken or irregular sidewalks.

> *The City should fix the sidewalks. When I go down the hill, the sidewalks are all cracked up and everything. If you can't see that good, you can fall and hurt yourself.*
>
> *I noticed there were holes in the sidewalk months and months ago. I called the public works department. They never got back to me.*
>
> *The sidewalks are in horrible condition. Sometimes I walk in the street, which is in better shape than the sidewalks.*

Street Furniture

The City regulates "A-frame" or "sandwich" signboards outside of businesses as well as tables and chairs on the sidewalks outside of restaurants. However, these obstacles continue to affect access to the public right-of-way, according to many community participants.

> *I used to love walking around North Beach, but they all put in seats and tables on the sidewalk. I've almost fallen over. You have to maneuver around. If there wasn't a table there would be room, but they should be responsible for these things being in the way*.
>
> *A-frame signs in front of restaurants: they put them right in the middle of the sidewalk.*

Construction Sites

City regulations require a safe and accessible path of travel around and/or through construction sites for all pedestrians, including those with disabilities. However, community participants described inadequate construction barriers and uncovered holes, along with scaffolding that makes it necessary for them to walk in the street. As one respondent said, "*Many times construction sites pose significant hazards and problems. Last week, I came across a deep hole with no covering."*

Obstructions or Overhangs

Participants also described the hazards of steps that protrude into their path of travel and dangers related to sidewalk trees.

> *You don't know there's a hole around the tree. They should put a guard around it so you don't fall in it, some sort of barrier.*
>
> *Those metal cages that go around certain trees curl up at the top so there's a metal spiky thing at head level. You turn and get poked by this pointy thing.*
>
> *I walk to get to work, and there's this tree that's always low-hanging. I called DPW and they said, "OK we'll come out and trim the trees." But in three years, no one has come out.*

Vehicles on the Sidewalks

Many participants reported the difficulties presented by cars and motorcycles parked across the sidewalk, in some instances requiring navigation out into the street to get around them. They also talked about the hazards of bicyclists and skateboarders on the sidewalks.

> *I personally would like the City to come and ticket people who are not parking in the proper place.… You have to go out into the street to get around the car.*
>
> *Bicyclists [nearly hit me] at least once or twice a week. My number could have been up. I was annoyed when I was sighted; now I'm blind, and I feel all the more vulnerable.*

Other Obstacles

Other obstacles described by participants included people standing, sitting, or lying across sidewalks, steps, or other public walkways; dogs who are leashed to poles and parking meters, blocking the sidewalk; garbage and dog feces on sidewalks; and garbage cans left on the sidewalk by garbage collectors.

> *Homeless people are constantly changing the landscape of where I'm going. They don't like it when you stumble on them. Something needs to be done about homeless people sleeping in public walkways.*
>
> *Any place that a public [stairway] walk connects two streets, the City should make sure that they have a regular schedule for cleaning those areas.… There's garbage that makes it difficult to walk safely and lots of greenery obstructing rails.*
>
> *The garbage collectors fling the garbage cans anywhere.*

Findings

In response to the types of dangers cited here, survey and focus group participants who are blind and low vision recommended San Francisco take the following actions:

- Increase responsiveness of the Department of Public Works (DPW) and Department of Parking and Traffic (DPT) to complaints;
- Develop and publicize a clear system for tracking intrusions or obstacles and addressing or removing them;
- Enforce related policies and rules about keeping public pathways clear, focusing on the general public, business owners, homeowners, car owners, and city contractors; and
- Educate people who are blind and low vision about their rights and grievance procedures.

Install Standardized Accessible Pedestrian Signals Citywide

Access to information about traffic movement and traffic signals is necessary for the safety and independence of pedestrians who are blind and low vision. For new construction or renovations, the City of San Francisco Department of Public Works requires tactile warnings at spots where pedestrians enter traffic (for example, at intersections). The clearest example of tactile warnings is the “truncated domes” on curb cuts at street corners. These are bright yellow sections of sidewalk in the sloped area of the curb, with raised bumps aligned with the direction of traffic. These warning measures are required by the ADA, the California Building Code, the San Francisco Building Code’s Department of Public Works Public Right-of-way Requirements, and in the case of major thoroughfares such as Van Ness Avenue, Cal Trans.

Another warning system at street corners is the Audible (or Accessible) Pedestrian Signals (APS), which make a sound to indicate when it is safe to cross. Some chirp, others beep; some give the location, others do not; and some include a tactile vibration for people who are hearing-impaired. One of the general requirements under Title II of the ADA is that all programs must be equally accessible to people with disabilities. Accessible crossing signals are particularly important for blind and low vision pedestrians who do not have the visual cues as to when it is safe to cross.

People who are blind and low vision in San Francisco reported that more should be done to ensure pedestrian safety via accessible crossing signals. Many of the respondents complained about lack of implementation or the slow pace of implementation. As one

participant asked, “Why is it taking San Francisco over twenty years to catch up? The technology is there.”

Almost all study participants reported difficulties with citywide navigation. We asked survey respondents who walk in San Francisco to select two out of a list of approaches they would find most helpful for walking in the city. ***More than sixty percent (61.4%) of blind and low vision survey respondents who walk in San Francisco said that audible signals at crosswalks would be the most helpful solution.***

The next most popular approach was textured raised bumps (truncated domes) on street corners, which were favored by one-third (33.2%) of respondents. Table 3 below shows the combined proportions of responses.

Table 3: Most Helpful Approaches
(*n* = 202)

Approaches to Accessible Pathways	%
Audible signals at crosswalks	61.4%
Raised bumps on street corners	33.2%
Tactile strips to follow on sidewalk	26.2%
Global positioning via cell phone/pager	12.4%
Infrared signage with a receiver	8.9%
Braille signs	4.0%
Other	14.9%
Don’t know/No opinion	7.4%

* Because respondents could select multiple response options, percentages add up to greater than 100%.

Audible and Accessible Pedestrian Signals

Community participants strongly urged San Francisco to install audible signals (also known as accessible signals) at crosswalks. This finding is consistent with a general preference expressed by many participants for auditory information above other approaches.

> *Out of all the concerns that people go through during the day, the most dangerous part of their day is getting around the City. If I were the Mayor, I would spend whatever it takes to install audible pedestrian signals immediately.*
>
> *Audible signals are [needed] for safety; pathways need to be marked. They say that it will cost a lot and take a lot of time. It should be speeded up.*
>
> *We need audio for the corners, because the drivers don’t care if you have a red-and-white cane.*

The improvements to audible technologies suggested by participants included using consistent sounds to indicate location and direction and increasing the volume and clarity of sound. We noted that English language audio or signage does not particularly add to the navigation barriers faced by Spanish-speaking focus group participants. (See Appendix G for more information.)

Participants praised the vibrating buttons at audible signals at crosswalks, which add to accessibility for people who are deaf or hearing-impaired; many would like to have more of these. As one person explained, *"One thing that has been helpful, being hearing and vision impaired, is the new signals that vibrate. Even with a verbal announcement, I can't hear it very well. As long as it vibrates, I know I can go."*

Tactile Street Corners

Many participants appreciated tactile, textured bumps (truncated domes) at street corners. Some would prefer a tactile "way-finding" strip, tactile or textured crosswalks, or crosswalk guides that would help them stay aligned and safely out of traffic.

> *Some curb cuts are painted yellow and have bumps. Not all of them do. But in general, I like them more than I don't like them.*
>
> *I like the raised bumps because then I know I'm coming up to the curb. The old curb cuts were very slippery when they were wet. I like the bumps.*
>
> *[I would like] a strip that goes from one curb to the other curb, in a straight line. Van Ness is a wide street and the lights are short, and it's hard to walk in a straight line.*

Findings

Community participants urged San Francisco to speed up installation of accessible pedestrian signals citywide. They also recommended that San Francisco do the following:

- Standardize audible pedestrian signals (APS), so that location and sounds are consistent and easy to use;
- Pair audible technologies with consistent tactile options (textured curb cuts, tactile strips, vibrating buttons);
- Pair audible technologies with large-print street signs for people who are low vision; and
- Increase traffic signal length at particularly wide streets to allow longer crossing times.

Reassess San Francisco's Use of Infrared Technologies

Although there are other technologies that provide navigation solutions, their usefulness was more contentious among blind and low vision participants. Most respondents were interested in auditory technological solutions that don't require them to carry additional devices.

Overall Recommendations – Public Pathways

The community survey and focus groups yielded the following key recommendations related to improving and increasing access to public pathways in San Francisco:

- Enforce policies to keep public pathways clear
- Install standardized audible and accessible pedestrian signals citywide
- Reassess San Francisco's use of infrared technologies that require individuals to carry a separate device.

3. Public Transit

Most legal requirements related to accessibility of public transportation come from the federal level, under the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In San Francisco, access to public transit for people with disabilities is further regulated by the current operator rules and instructions handbook of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SF MTA). (Although findings in this section of the report include some that apply to both MUNI and BART, BART is not a City and County program.)

Results of this study demonstrate that San Francisco needs to improve and increase disability access to public transit for people who are blind and low vision, who cannot drive and are heavily dependent on MUNI trains and buses to get around San Francisco. As with other areas in this study, most community participants did not feel that major overhauls would be needed to improve their access. They recommended the following:

- Expand the use of audible announcements;
- Improve signage and other navigation aids to promote safety; and
- Where the rules or procedures are not being followed, improve customer service by increased responsiveness to complaints.

What MTA Regulations Require

- Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act;
- When a disabled person is observed, operators are to stop, open doors, and announce the line and destination of the vehicle;
- Operators must pick up people with disabilities; no "pass up" is permitted;
- Operators must acknowledge and announce stop requests by passengers;
- Operators must always announce stops, at least at transfer points with other fixed routes, major intersections and destination points, all MUNI Metro stations in the subway, and at intervals along a route sufficient to permit individuals to be oriented to their location;
- Operators are required to use the Digital Voice Announcement System (DVAS) on vehicles that are so equipped. If the vehicle does not have a working DVAS system, then the operator is responsible for making announcements and calling out transfer points and major points of interest;
- Route and destination must be announced at all stops served by multiple lines or destinations;
- Guide, signal, and service animals must be allowed to ride free on all equipment at all hours, on leash but not muzzled. The patron is not required to have a Disabled ID/Pass or any kind of ID for the animal; and
- Operators must request passengers to yield the forward seats to persons with disabilities and to seniors.

Expand and Enforce Audible Announcements on Transit Vehicles

Although the ADA requires audible information to be presented visually, there are no specific laws or regulations requiring that visual information also must be audible. However, the SF MTA's current operator rules and instructions handbook requires operators to announce stops. Details about MTA regulations related to access for people who are blind and low vision are included in the text box below.

Blind and low vision transit riders in San Francisco rely on audible announcements of transit stops, whether via automatic systems or drivers' announcements.

We asked survey respondents who use public transportation in San Francisco what they would find most useful to them. They were asked to select two items from a list of choices. ***Seventy-three percent (72.9%) of blind and low vision survey takers who are transit riders in San Francisco would find "talking" buses and MUNI trains most useful for accessible transit.*** Table 4 shows the combined proportions of responses.

Table 4: Most Useful for Public Transportation
(*n* = 177)

Approaches for Accessible Transit	%
"Talking" buses or MUNI trains	72.9%
A driver who is helpful and freely gives information	53.1%
Bus stops or MUNI train stops that announce what bus is coming	22.6%
Bus stops or MUNI train stops that tell you what routes stop there	15.8%
Route and schedule information available by phone or Internet	11.3%
Other public transit workers who are helpful	9.6%
Other	7.9%
Don't know/no opinion	0.6%

* Because respondents could select multiple response options, percentages add up to greater than 100%.

Enforce Use of Audible Announcements

According to community participants, MUNI bus drivers frequently fail to use the automated Digital Voice Announcement System (DVAS), in violation of MTA policy. Nor are operators calling out the stops in lieu of using the DVAS. As a result, people who are blind and low vision cannot identify where they are or prepare to disembark. They are missing their stops; sometimes they end up lost.

> *The driver won't tell us the stop, or the sound is down, or it's not operational. I'd say that 60 percent of the time that's a problem.*
>
> *It would be helpful if the driver could announce the upcoming streets. We never know where we are. He might announce it when he gets there, but by that time you're stuck. They don't do it in time.*
>
> *That's one of the biggest problems: drivers either turn off the devices or refuse to tell you the stop.*
>
> *One of the problems is that sometimes drivers turn [DVAS] off because it's annoying [to them]. When I'm on [the bus] I tell them, you either turn it back on or announce every stop. When I tell them to turn it back on they are clearly annoyed. They should be on all the time and not be able to be turned off.*
>
> *Use the technology that already exists. Many of the buses turn off or turn down the voice commands. Or the bus driver has them turned in the wrong direction. Or the stops are wrong, on buses and also trains. They need to enforce the law that stops be announced.*
>
> *If I were the Mayor, I would call an emergency meeting of all the MUNI drivers before they get to work and tell them to turn on their audio whenever they stop, on every street.*

Synchronize Announcements With Stops

A further problem reported is that even when operators use the DVAS, the announcements are often not correctly synchronized with stops.

> *The electronic announcements on the newer buses are very helpful. The one issue for me is that they are off a stop or two. You don't know if you just passed it or it's the next one coming up.*
>
> *Even on some automated buses, the timing is off. Like on the 47, sometimes it will announce the street after we've passed it already. The timing meant I didn't ever really know what stop I was at.*

Improve Clarity and Volume of Announcements

Reliance on sound for navigation means that clarity and volume of announcements on transit vehicles and in stations makes a big difference for people who are blind and low vision.

> *I'm on MUNI quite a lot, and it's always a mumble, like what's going on? There's an ongoing problem with sound in the station.*
>
> *[On BART] sometimes the announcement is like a whisper, depending on the intercom system.*

Findings

In summary, survey and focus group participants who are blind and low vision recommended that San Francisco carry out the following:

- Enforce audible announcements of stops by operators or Digital Voice Announcement System (DVAS);
- Synchronize DVAS announcements with stops; and
- Improve clarity and volume of DVAS announcements.

Improve Customer Service by Transit Operators

Address Transit Operators' Behavior and Adherence to Regulations

In addition to the appropriate use of audible technologies, transit operators control all other aspects of customer service on transit vehicles. Their behavior has an enormous impact on the riders. Operators' willingness to assist people who are blind and low vision with courtesy and adherence to the ADA and other regulations can make a significant difference in these riders' public transit experiences.

> *A lot of the drivers are not very courteous to you about when you want to board the bus, when you want to get off the bus. They passed me by… when I had the cane.*
>
> *Bus drivers—they get a training and then the knowledge is gone. They still grab my dog's harness.*
>
> *I use MUNI, mainly buses, and I find the service is uneven. I get some [drivers] who are just wonderful, and some where I will be chasing after a bus and it pulls away once I get there. I'd like to see some attention to the [behavior of] conductors. We are the customers, and we want to be treated well.*
>
> *Drivers disrespect me when I ask them to call out stops because I don't look blind, and they don't believe me when I tell them I am.*

Keep Disabled Seating Available

Federal law mandates that the front seats of the bus be reserved for seniors and persons with disabilities, including people who may not appear to have a disability. Operators are required to request that other passengers yield these seats. Yet we learned

from community participants that these seats are rarely available as intended and that drivers do not consistently ask other riders to yield the seats.

> *When I get on board, sometimes the bus driver says, "Hey the lady needs a seat." If you look like you can see, even for seniors, people don't get up. The bus driver should really be responsible. Some drivers say, "This bus isn't moving until the lady gets a seat."*
>
> *It would be good if bus drivers have the training to know how to ask people to move [from disabled seating]. They're people that have to work with the public all the time. They need to know how to do that…. Some drivers don't give a hoot; some drivers do care.*

Findings

In summary, blind and low vision participants recommended the following actions:

- Address transit operators' behavior and adherence to regulations; and
- Make sure disabled seating is available.

Increase Audible Information for Travelers Waiting at Transit Stops

Provide Audible Travel Information at Stops

Audible information for people waiting at transit stops improves independent travel for people who are blind and low vision. There are few other means to confirm a correct location or destination. Among survey respondents using public transportation, about one-quarter would find bus shelters or MUNI stops that announce arriving vehicles and their destinations most useful for navigation.

> *At each stop there should be an announcement telling you which bus it is and where it is going.*
>
> *The new talking bus pilot study on Church and Duboce that announces the time of the next bus and train I find extremely helpful. If they could implement that city-wide, it would be really great. It would be great for people who are completely blind.… It could be a little louder because the J train and traffic overwhelms the sound of the speaker. But it's a great idea and works well.*

Provide Audible Bus Number and Destination

Community participants also suggested audible announcements by each arriving bus, providing its number and destination when it arrives at the stop.

> *One of my main problems is I don't know what bus it is, so the bus comes up and I can't read the number on the bus, so what I have to do is stand there and they open the door, and I say, 'What bus is this?' It's not right.*
>
> *When the bus arrives and it announces the destination, it's very helpful. For example, the 38 Geary has four different destinations.*

Findings

In summary, survey and focus group participants who are blind and low vision recommended that the SF MTA:

- Provide audible travel information at bus shelters and other transit stops; and
- Provide audible bus number and destination upon its arrival.

Improve Signage and Navigation Aids to Promote Safety

MUNI follows signage requirements of the ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities (ADAAG) and the ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Transportation Vehicles, which provide extremely specific requirements for the positioning, character heights, and contrast of accessible signage. For example, signs must be positioned high up on walls or overhead, and characters and symbols must contrast with their background (either light characters on a dark background or dark characters on a light background).

Increase Size, Contrast and Reflectivity of Signage

Participants who are low vision raised complaints about the size, contrast, color, and reflectivity of station name signs, exit signs, and escalator and elevator signs in MUNI and BART. They recommended larger and lower signs that are reflective or are constantly lit (rather than flashing) with high-contrast, black-and-white lettering.

> *I'm visually impaired and my greatest concern is signs. They're not reflective and they're not big enough on either MUNI or BART. The [destination] signs are small and you can't see them.*

> *We need constant illumination rather than lights flashing. The only way I know I'm at Civic Center is because I can see that there are two words.*
>
> *Signage should be large, with good contrast, and more at eye level.*
>
> *BART stations in San Francisco in the past used to be lit. The words were printed in white and the letters were easier to read. But now the print has been changed to red, which is a bad color for a low vision person to see. My top complaint is that you don't know where you are because of poor signage.*
>
> *If you're in BART, you wonder, "What station is this?" You have a heck of a time trying to find the name.*

Use High-Contrast Paint and Way-Finding Strips

Survey and focus group participants urged use of high-contrast paint on transit escalators and stairs, and the addition of way-finding strips leading into BART and MUNI stations. As one person pointed out, *"Here's a good thing: when I take the Embarcadero station, I notice that all the steps are yellow. I can just go down the stairs. I love that. I found that very helpful for me as I'm rushing down the stairs."* We heard similarly appreciative comments about the Powell Street BART and MUNI station stairs.

Address Safety Hazards

Study findings also reveal that people who are blind and low vision may face dangerous obstacles at transit stops, such as utility poles and signs located directly in front of where MUNI buses stop, which make it difficult or impossible to exit a bus safely.

> *When electric buses pull up to the curb… when you get off you run into a telephone pole. They assume that you can walk around it. It seems small, but it's really important for someone who's blind.*
>
> *At the 22 Fillmore stop at Church and Duboce, there is a light pole, a trashcan, and a utility pole right where the bus door opens. Even with a cane, it's almost impossible to get out of the bus. Light rails like the N Judah or J Church let you off at an island, and there's a thin piece of hard metal sign located perpendicular to the car. You can literally slice yourself in half. Someone should look into that; it's extremely dangerous.*

MTA could address these safety concerns by instructing operators to stop vehicles so exits will be clear of obstacles. Participants suggested other types of safety hazards related to public transit use could be addressed via visual cues (such as consistent use of

orange cones showing BART escalator repair) or audible cues (such as a sound indicating someone has reached the last step down on a MUNI bus.

Findings

To increase their ability to navigate safely at MUNI and BART stops and stations, blind and low vision community members recommended that San Francisco take the following actions:

- Increase size, contrast, and reflectivity of signage;
- Use high-contrast paint and way-finding strips; and
- Address safety hazards.

Overall Recommendations – Public Transit

The community survey and focus groups yielded the following set of key recommendations related to improving and increasing access to public transit in San Francisco:

- Expand and enforce use of audible announcements on transit vehicles
- Improve customer service by transit operators
- Provide audible information for travelers waiting at transit stops
- Improve signage and navigation aids to promote safety.

4. Other City Services

The survey and focus groups also provided information about ways to improve or increase access in other areas of city services. Table 5 below summarizes the prioritization of areas of city services by survey respondents. (Also see Section IV for full details of the project methodology. See Appendices for additional information.)

Table 5: Top Priority Areas for Improvement

Area of City Services	% of Respondents	Mean score (1 to 7)
Transportation, travel, and pathways	41.7%	6.28
Public health and social services	18.0%	5.90
Housing	12.3%	5.88
Public safety and emergency services	11.0%	6.12
Arts and recreation	6.6%	5.79
Administrative services	4.4%	5.72
Other/No Opinion/Decline to State	6.1%	N/A

Housing, Public Health and Social Services

Housing and public health and social services ranked second and third in priority for areas San Francisco should focus on, though well below the interest in transportation. Only 18% and 12% of respondents choose housing and public health and social services, respectively, as top priority areas. The discussions in the study's focus groups of the needs of blind and low vision San Franciscans around these areas could not do justice to these large topics of concern. Further investigation is needed.

Public Safety and Emergency Services

As required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), public buildings provide emergency exit information on Brailled placards next to elevators. We asked all survey respondents what would be most useful to them in finding an emergency exit. The vast majority said that they would find recorded audio announcements or staff assistance most useful for exiting a public building safely in an emergency. In contrast, just four percent (3.5%) would find the Braille signs useful.

Arts and Recreation

A relatively small proportion (6.6%) of survey respondents selected city services related to arts and recreation as their top priority for improving and increasing access for people who are blind and low vision in San Francisco.

Among survey respondents with interest in public art exhibits, more than half (51.2%) would prefer to experience exhibits through an audio description at the site where the art is located, particularly by wearing personal headphones to hear a description of the exhibit.

Focus group participants reported that they particularly appreciate tactile exhibits. They also appreciate "access days," or days when people with disabilities have priority access to exhibits, and docent tours. Participants clarified, however, that the preferred form of accommodation (e.g., audio description versus docent tour) would vary by individual.

> *I would like to have more access to the arts. This is a world-class city and people who are blind and low vision should have the opportunity to explore and enjoy what's here.*
>
> *That's what's difficult about being in a museum – you can't touch anything. I lose that sense of whatever the artist was trying to get at, if you can't touch it. If I could just get an idea by feeling or touching, I'd be happy.*
>
> *The City should have information on their website for arts programs for people with disabilities. That would be a start.*

For further investigation, it may be useful to make a distinction between public arts and recreation.

> *We should separate arts and recreation. I have a low interest in the arts. I have a high interest in recreation…. Arts are a low priority for me because there's not enough information telling me what I'm standing in front of.*
>
> *That's where recreation has an advantage. In the Park, you can smell the flowers and have other sensory experiences.*

Administrative Services – Department of Elections

In the area of administrative services, community focus groups yielded a number of recommendations for the Department of Elections. Many focus group participants vote with

absentee ballots. Those who vote at their polling place highlighted the importance of several factors:

- Voting materials in alternate formats
- Advance training for poll workers on using accessible voting machines
- Advance training for voters who are blind and low vision
- Increased visibility for signs indicating polling place location
- Personal assistance by poll workers.

Accessible Voting Materials

Participants appreciate receiving voter information on cassette tape or via website information. They also recommended condensing voter information, embossing the print on ballots, and sending voter information further in advance of elections.

> *The Library in San Francisco provides the city and state ballot on tape and that's what I use. And they send it to us ahead of time.*
>
> *The Department of Elections could set up one portion of their operations to prepare the voting pamphlet on a cassette and standardize who to call prior to the election so [there] won't have to be so many surprises.*
>
> *Those ballots this time, there were too many! I think it was six pieces. Can't they condense this so that it won't be so long? …I just thought, when is this going to end? I just wanted to dump it in the trash after a while, but I thought: Let me vote.*
>
> *If they would emboss the printing [on ballots] that would really help.*
>
> *I think website stuff is really valuable. If there was a text-based place where people could read [voter information] online. It's tedious to go through the San Francisco Ballots. The tapes are great but you could scan through that stuff quicker online on a computer.*

Advance Training for Poll Workers

Closely related to the value of personal assistance is the recommendation that poll workers receive advance training on using accessible voting machines.

> *I would strongly recommend that the staff be trained better; it almost took longer for the staff to figure it out [the accessible voting machine] than for me to cast the vote. In the primary in March I went to City Hall to use the machine. It took them about 15 or 20 minutes to figure out how to use the machine.*

> *The people at the polls don't know how to use the machine.*

Advance Training for Voters

Community participants also recommended advance training for voters who are blind and low vision, so they are well prepared to use machines before election day.

> *I think we need to have training on how to use the machine prior to going to the polling place. It can be such an emotional ordeal just to vote—the whole process of listening to the instructions. I prefer to have instructions prior to that so when I get there I can vote intelligently without having to worry about how to do it.*
>
> *One other thing that could be good is if there is a place that has a machine for people to come check it out before, a demonstration, to figure out how to work it before election day, because it's good to know in advance.*

Improved Signage for Polling Places

Making it easier to find polling places via better signage would facilitate the voting process for people who are blind and low vision.

> *Once I get to the polling place I would need something very obvious that lets me know it's a polling place. A bright sign, a blue handicap sign that lets me know I'm in the right space.*
>
> *What they need to do is put a big plastic sign to say this is the polling place, so that anyone can see it. It is just invisible.*

Personal Assistance

We heard that trained assistance by poll workers is extremely helpful for voters who are blind and low vision.

> [*The City should] have someone in the polling station who could verbalize how to use the equipment.*
>
> *There should be someone at the [polling place] that would be knowledgeable that would help me get to the machine and help me use the machine, tell me what button to press…. I would need someone to show me exactly what button to touch to vote.*

5. Customer Service and Communication

Community members raised many concerns about customer service as an area for improvement that cuts across all city services. Customer service includes appropriate, helpful, and courteous response by city workers to people who are blind and low vision. Community members recommended training for city workers about the rights and needs of people with disabilities.

Study participants also called for enforcement of laws, regulations, and policies for providing services to people with disabilities, including providing informational materials in alternative formats. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), those serving the public are obligated to provide assistance to people who are blind and low vision regardless of whether that person is accompanied by a partner, family member, or other personal assistant.

Personal assistance from city workers is an essential aspect of accessing city services for people who are blind and low vision in a variety of situations. ***Yet almost twenty percent (19.3%) of survey respondents reported that they have received "inadequate or inappropriate" assistance from a San Francisco city employee.***

In many situations, personal assistance is important for community members to access city services:

- When getting around inside city government buildings, almost eighty percent (78.9%) of survey respondents would prefer personal assistance (such as from staff or a help desk).
- More than half (53.1%) of blind and low vision survey respondents who use public transit in San Francisco highlighted the importance of a driver who is helpful and gives information freely.
- For receiving information from government departments about city services, benefits, and activities, the greatest proportion of blind and low vision survey respondents would prefer talking to a city official on the phone.
- Related to voting, focus group participants cited the importance of trained polling staff who can familiarize them with voting equipment, and of City Hall workers who can direct them to submit absentee ballots.

At the same time, respondents reported concerns about "uncommunicative," "touchy," or even "downright hostile" city workers and other employees serving the public: supervisors and staff in city departments, security guards in public buildings, MUNI and

BART drivers, taxi drivers, poll staff, construction workers, security checkpoint staff at the airport, and city safety and emergency workers.

> *Today I came into [City Hall] through the concierge area. I had to go through the metal detector. I didn't know what I was supposed to do. The guard was just standing there… she was very uncommunicative; she didn't tell me what I had to do.*
>
> *With MUNI drivers, you have to ask them to put the coach down for you, and then they're very touchy about it. Don't you see my cane? That's standard service.*
>
> *Many [taxi] drivers are not courteous, nor are they helpful. They wait for you to grapple with the door. The hand is out for the tip but not to help you. It's a lack of courtesy.*
>
> *I've asked for assistance, and people will say, "Can't you see?" and I practically had to prove to them I can't see. Be sensitive if someone asks for assistance, and think that they are asking you because they need it.*

As addressed in the earlier Public Transit section, focus group participants gave many reports about poor customer service by public transit workers. Among survey respondents who reported inadequate or inappropriate service from a city department, the greatest number cited MUNI. Community participants call for systemic improvements.

> *My suggestion is to think of some way to reinforce and reward [MUNI] drivers who do what they're supposed to do. There are some drivers who are really nice… and there are some drivers who are really cruel. There is not yet an effective way to get people to do what they're supposed to be doing. The fact is a lot of them don't. They seem angry and unhappy, and it seems that people need to think of a systemic way to reinforce and monitor drivers' behavior.*

Findings

Two key recommendations emerged in the area of customer service and communication:

- Provide comprehensive training on disability rights and awareness for city employees who are managers or who have contact with the public.
- Provide information and communications intended for people who are blind or low vision in a variety of formats.

Provide Disability Rights and Awareness Training for City Workers

Community members strongly recommended training for city employees about how to assist people with disabilities.

> *The City could incorporate disability awareness and sensitivity to blindness training and information for city employees into an ADA awareness day.*
>
> *People in public capacities need a basic, brief training: "This is how you would help somebody who has a disability." Make it a basic part of the training procedure.*
>
> *Guards, drivers—they should have some sort of training… anyone who works directly with the public will need training.*
>
> *If I were Mayor, I would make it mandatory that every city and county worker in San Francisco know about the visually impaired and especially train them about the red-and-white cane.*

Participants called attention to particular city jobs requiring a great deal of public contact—MUNI employees, security guards, police and other safety and emergency workers—for whom training may be particularly vital.

> *There should be a sensitivity training for MUNI employees. I used to use a disability card but got tired of being asked all the time, "What is your disability?"*
>
> *At the airport, I'm not sure if the security checkpoint people have had training. I've had people ask me about my cane. You'd think it was rudimentary knowledge. If they don't know what a cane is, how will they know what a bomb is?*
>
> *It's important to continue to educate the police force of the rights of blind people. A blind person being injured on the street is not about being blind.*
>
> *The Police Department, MUNI drivers, BART agents, firemen, and city departments… all need more training and education.*

Moreover, respondents made specific suggestions about the types of sensitivities that the training should address. They recommended in particular training city staff in the following areas:

- How to respond to requests for assistance with courtesy and patience;
- How to handle confidential and sensitive information;

- Appropriate customer service to persons who ask for assistance but may not appear to have a disability; and
- Understanding that people with disabilities, including people who are blind or low vision, may have a wide range of needs for assistance.

In this regard, respondents said:

> *For me, I think the biggest thing in terms of assistance is staff understanding that they need to do things a little more slowly. If I'm trying to write something it takes longer, it's slower. People are very pressured for time sometimes. They get brusque and irritated. With low vision, you don't look disabled, so sometimes if you ask a question that seems obvious, people can be abrupt and hostile.*
>
> *One of the things I've had to do a bunch of times is fill out a form with a stranger, who gets to know things like when my last period was, or what my political affiliations are. It's having the customer service skills so that's not a big deal, so confidentiality is taken into account.*
>
> *It would be helpful if city staff people could be made aware that blind people cover a wide range of travel abilities. Some people just need directions; some need more help…. The basic thing is, if you were training city people, to ask the person what they need and how they want to be helped….[It would be helpful] if people could learn to listen to what is really needed and turn off their anxiety.*

Provide Information and Communications in Alternative Formats

A key area of good customer service to the public is pro viding information. Under the ADA, people who are blind and low vision have the right to alternative formats for information that any government agency is providing to the public. Alternative formats may include Braille, large print, audio tape, and electronic formats that may be played on a computer. The US Department of Justice calls for "primary consideration," specifying that public entities must honor the choice of an individual with a disability and stating that the individual with the disability is in the best position to determine what type of aid or service will be effective.

Yet we heard accounts from project participants that demonstrate that this legal requirement is not being met by city departments.

> *My problem is that everyone thinks I'm sighted. I have to get nasty [by insisting on help] or go home and fill [a form] in because it's less of a problem.*

I asked for [an audible format for] information at health services and was told that a woman who spoke Chinese would interpret for me.

In any such situation when I'm asking for reasonable accommodation, if a worker—City or otherwise—will not help me, I immediately say "I want to see your supervisor," and the reason I do that is to help educate wherever I am that there [should be] a reasonable accommodation as well as human kindness.

I've had issues with the city involving information. I think I should be able to write the city a letter with my requests and have a response in a certain period of time. I don't mind waiting, but a procedure needs to be in place.

Is it okay for the Department of Elections to tell me to print the voters guide and get someone to read it to me, when I call and ask them for a taped version?

I've had people say, "I'm not allowed to help."

Project findings demonstrated that, to some extent, new technologies and formats such as large print have superceded Braille, particularly for older adults who are newly blind or low vision and who may not have learned Braille. This situation partially explains why only a small proportion of survey respondents (5%) prefer to receive information from city departments in Braille compared to other formats.

The survey asked all respondents to indicate two communication methods from a list of choices that they would find most useful for receiving information from San Francisco city departments. As stated above, the greatest proportion of survey respondents would find talking to a city official on the phone the most useful method for receiving information from city departments. Other sources of communication, in order of preference,

Community Education About Disability Rights

Many San Franciscans who are blind or low vision are not aware of their rights in relation to obtaining city services.

- Sixty-four percent (63.6%) of blind and low vision survey respondents were not aware that they have the right to ask city program staff for information in an alternative format.
- Sixty-six percent (66.2%) of respondents said they did not know they could call the Mayor's Office on Disability to complain when their rights are not being met.

Older people in particular would benefit from information about their rights. Respondents older than 60 and female respondents of all ages are less likely to have asked for assistance with accessing San Francisco city services; older respondents are also less likely to be aware that they could call the Mayor's Office on Disability if their rights are not being met.

Clearly, community education is needed for people who are blind and low vision about disability rights and about recourses such as grievance procedures.

are large print by mail, Internet or e-mail, cassette tapes, TV, and radio. (Although nearly one-third of respondents reported that they currently receive information via radio or TV, fewer than one-fifth find these to be the most useful formats.) Table 6 below shows the combined proportions of responses.

Table 6: Most Useful Information Methods
(*n* = 228)

Information Method	%
Talking to a city official on the phone	43.0%
Large print by mail	34.6%
Internet or email	22.8%
Cassette tape	21.9%
TV	18.9%
Radio	18.4%
Automated phone menu	10.5%
Braille	5.3%
Other	5.3%
Don't know/No opinion	3.5%

* Because respondents could select multiple response options, percentages add up to greater than 100%.

A few individuals in the focus groups highlighted the importance of accessible websites (websites that are compatible with software that turns text into speech, commonly called screen-reading software) with information about city services, such as voter information and public events. This area of accessible communication about public events, services, and activities may merit more investigation.

Overall Recommendations – Customer Service and Communication

Community members who are blind and low vision recommended that San Francisco implement the following actions in order to improve customer service and communication by city workers:

- Provide training on disability rights and awareness for city employees
- Provide information and communications in a variety of formats.

6. Summary of Recommendations

The report has highlighted recommendations in the highest priority areas of people who are blind and low vision, for the City of San Francisco to improve and increase accessibility of city services. The following summary compiles the key recommendations detailed in the previous sections. All recommendations are directed to the City of San Francisco by community members who are blind and low vision.

Public Pathways

1. Enforce policies to keep public pathways clear:

- Increase responsiveness of the Department of Public Works and Department of Parking and Traffic to complaints;
- Develop and publicize a clear system for tracking intrusions and obstacles and addressing or removing them;
- Enforce policies and rules about keeping public pathways clear with the general public, business owners, homeowners, car owners, and city contractors; and
- Educate people who are blind and low vision about their rights in this area and about grievance procedures.

2. Install standardized, accessible pedestrian signals citywide:

- Standardize the location and sounds of audible pedestrian signal (APS) technology for consistency and ease of use;
- Pair audible technologies with consistent tactile options (textured curb cuts, tactile strips, vibrating buttons);
- Pair audible technologies with large-print street signs; and
- Increase traffic signal length to allow longer crossing times at wide intersections.

3. Reassess San Francisco's use of infrared technologies that require individuals to carry a separate device.

Public Transit

1. Expand and enforce use of audible announcements on transit vehicles:

- Enforce audible announcements of stops by operators or Digital Voice Announcement System (DVAS);
- Synchronize DVAS announcements with stops; and
- Improve clarity and volume of DVAS announcements.

2. Improve customer service:

- Address transit operators' behavior and adherence to regulations; and
- Enforce the requirement to keep disabled seating available.

3. Increase audible information for travelers at transit stops:

- Provide audible travel information at transit stops (such as bus shelters); and
- Provide audible bus number and destination upon its arrival at a transit stop to passengers waiting to board.

4. Improve signage and navigation aids to promote safety:

- Provide larger, lower, and high-contrast station and destination identification signs;
- Use high-contrast paint and way-finding strips; and
- Address safety hazards.

Customer Service and Communication

1. Provide comprehensive disability rights and awareness training for city employees who are managers or who have contact with the public.

2. Provide information and communications in a variety of formats.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The Blind and Low vision Priorities Project was conducted with the collaborative leadership of the LightHouse for the Blind and the Mayor's Office on Disability. A professional researcher and evaluator, Rachel Lanzerotti, MSW, managed the project. Telephone surveyors from a professional survey firm, The Henne Group, conducted the telephone survey using trained interviewers. Facilitators with experience working in diverse communities, including Bruckner Consultants, LLC, and Michael J. Wong Consulting, led the focus group discussions. The project provided interpretation for focus groups consisting of Spanish-only speakers and deaf-blind individuals.

The BLVPP Steering Committee publicized the project and recruited participants through community outreach efforts. Steering Committee members made presentations at the Mayor's Disability Council (televised), Human Services Network meetings, a membership and board meeting of the Coalition of Agencies Serving the Elderly (CASE), and at the annual conference of the California Council of the Blind (CCB). We published information about the project on the LightHouse web site, through the LightHouse's *Lantern* newsletter, and CCB's *California Connections*.

Several points consistently informed our methodological decisions. First, the project sought the direct experience of people who are blind and low vision regarding their interaction with city services in San Francisco. Second, it sought to gauge community priorities for increasing and improving city services without asking participants to make exclusionary choices among them, as they have a right to them all. Third, the project endeavored to make a distinction between participants' difficulties with access to city services and access in other areas that may affect livability but that would be outside the scope of city accountability for disability access.

Research Methods

The Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project used the following research methods to address the project's guiding questions:

- Literature and secondary demographic data review
- Leadership polls
- Telephone survey
- Focus groups

Literature and Secondary Demographic Data Review

As a first step, the project conducted a literature search and review to locate research that might inform the project design and implementation. Although the BLVPP is more focused in its scope than a broad needs assessment would be, we hoped to determine whether other entities have conducted assessments related to public services to people who are blind or low vision. Project consultants searched for relevant publications of the past ten years, from 1995 to 2006, using electronic databases and a general Internet search for related articles or projects.

We also conducted a search for census and other secondary demographic data that would describe the blind and low vision population in San Francisco and for comparative purposes, California. We found very few data specific to San Francisco. Prevalence data for blind or visually impaired and overall disability can be found at the state and national level.

Leadership Polls

In April and May 2006, the Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project held three "leadership poll" focus group discussions at the LightHouse for the Blind with informants who are blind and low vision. In total, ten key informants participated in one of three leadership polls, including LightHouse board members, staff, and leaders from other community groups.

The purpose of the leadership polls was twofold: to ask participants about their priorities related to improving the accessibility of city services, and to get their input about

how to approach broader communities of people who are blind and low vision about their priorities related to city services.

Leadership poll meetings used a prepared protocol of discussion questions; responses were analyzed for themes within and across groups.

Limitations of Leadership Polls

Leadership polls provide qualitative data meant to help inform project design. Because of the qualitative approach and small and context-specific sample sizes, it may not be possible to generalize findings beyond these respondents.

The leadership poll participants were key informants identified by the LightHouse. Although they represent a leadership perspective on community-wide concerns, they may not be representative of San Francisco blind and low vision communities in many ways, including age, race/ethnicity, and income level. One specific caveat raised by leadership polls participants is that they represent a group of "independent travelers," (that is, they leave their homes, often without a sighted companion) and that people who are blind or low vision who do not travel independently might have different priorities. Along similar lines, as one participant pointed out, ensuring greater participation is a broader, ongoing challenge related to working in these communities: *"I see the same people in many of the meetings and focus groups. You would think there are only two dozen blind people."*

Telephone Survey

Drawing from its organizational databases, the LightHouse generated a list of 1,658 community members, clients, donors, and individuals who responded to outreach efforts related to this project. Only individuals for whom phone numbers were available were selected for the sample. The LightHouse engaged professional telephone surveyors, The Henne Group (THG), with the capacity to use trained interviewers and a 12-station Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system.

We requested that THG stratify the sample by gender, with equal representation of men and women. We also limited the sample to names with telephone numbers in the following Bay Area telephone area codes: 415, 510, 650, 925, and 707. We further limited participation eligibility to those who self-identified as blind, low vision, and/or visually impaired; to those who either reside in San Francisco or visit San Francisco at least twice a year, with a target of 80% San Francisco residents; and to respondents over 18 years old who could hear and respond to the surveyer in English.

THG made up to five attempts to contact each member of the sample. For their participation, each participant received a gift of a radio and a ten percent discount coupon for purchases at Adaptations, the LightHouse store.

Survey Instrument

The BLVPP Steering Committee, composed of the Directors and Management Staff of the LightHouse for the Blind and the Mayor's Office on Disability (MOD), in consultation with consultant Rachel Lanzerotti and The Henne Group, developed a 20-minute survey instrument based on the literature review and on findings from the leadership polls. Additional staff from the LightHouse and the MOD reviewed a draft instrument prior to pilot testing.

Prior to launching the survey, THG did a pilot test with 11 English-speaking, hearing individuals who responded to outreach efforts and others randomly selected from the LightHouse databases. The BLVPP Steering Committee, in consultation with THG, reviewed the pilot test results and made final revisions to the survey instrument and sampling plan.

Response Rate

THG attempted up to five calls to a sample of 1,235 individuals. Of these, 228 interviews (18.5%) were completed. Based on the disposition of completed, ineligible, unknown, or refused interviews, and using the Council of American Research Organizations (CASRO) method, the simple response rate is calculated as 32.4%.

The following data table summarizes characteristics of those who responded to the survey. Three quarters (75.9%) of survey respondents live in San Francisco.

Table 7: Respondent Characteristics

Gender (*n* = 228)	Female = 52.6% Male = 47.4%	
Age (*n* = 223)	Average Age = 64 years Age Range = 18 to 97 years	
Age Groupings (*n* = 228)	18 to 29 years old	4.4%
	30 to 39 years old	3.9%
	40 to 49 years old	11.0%
	50 to 59 years old	21.1%
	60 to 69 years old	14.9%
	70 to 79 years old	18.0%
	80 to 89 years old	20.6%
	90 or older	3.9%
	Declined to state	2.2%
Race / Ethnicity (*n* = 228)	Caucasian/White	53.5%
	African American/Black	17.1%
	Latino/a or Hispanic	7.0%
	Asian	6.1%
	Biracial/Multiracial	2.6%
	American Indian/Native American	1.3%
	Southeast Asian	1.3%
	Arab/Middle Eastern	0.9%
	African/Afro-Caribbean	0.4%
	Other	3.1%
	Declined to state	6.6%
Individual Annual Income (*n* = 228)	Less than $15,000	40.4%
	$15,000 to $29,999	22.4%
	$30,000 to $49,999	8.8%
	More than $50,000	8.4%
	Declined to state	20.2%

* The sum of the percentages may be slightly less or greater than 100% due to rounding.

Data Analysis

The CATI process involves data input directly into a database in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Consultants cleaned and recoded data as necessary for analysis and ran the overall frequency or response to each question. Following review by the BLVPP Steering Committee, we ran multivariate analysis (cross-tabulations), using chi-square tests of independence to explore whether comparisons of responses were statistically significant. The results from chi-square tests are noted in this report with a χ^2 symbol, followed by a *p*-value showing the level of statistical significance for the test. The *p*-value represents confidence level or margin of error; thus a smaller *p*-value indicates greater significance. In general, we used the 95% confidence level, or 5% margin of error, ($p = .05$) to determine significance. This report includes only statistically significant findings (χ^2, $p \leq .05$) from the multivariate analysis.

Limitations of the Telephone Survey

We are aware of specific biases in the telephone survey sample. Those who responded to the survey may have been more motivated than those who did not respond. Also, the databases from which we drew the sample represent those who already are connected to the LightHouse and therefore may not be entirely representative of people in San Francisco who are blind and low vision.

Based on available comparable data, the survey sample appears to reflect what is known about the general population of people who are blind or visually impaired, especially in terms of race. Taking into consideration the diversity of San Francisco communities, however, there may be some under-representation in the survey sample of Latinos and Asian/Pacific Islanders, perhaps because the survey was conducted in English.

The wording and order of survey questions may have influenced responses. The instrument was designed with underlying assumptions based on the literature review and leadership polls—specifically, that transportation and communication barriers are significant concerns among communities of people who are blind and low vision.

Focus Groups

In November 2006, the Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project (BLVPP) held two large community meetings, which broke into seven small discussion groups. In February 2007, the project held three additional, smaller focus groups, one each for people who are deaf-blind, for youth, and for people whose primary language is Spanish. Total attendance at the focus groups was 73 people who are blind or low vision (We sought to conduct a focus group in Cantonese and Mandarin but were not able to generate sufficient interest among community participants. At the same time, it is important to note that the focus groups were racially and ethnically diverse, with a range of ages represented.)

The overall purpose of the focus groups was to bring together people who are blind and low vision and who live in, work in, or frequently visit San Francisco. By engaging community members in small group discussions at the meetings, the project sought to gather qualitative data that would add context and depth to the telephone survey findings. We designed a discussion protocol to gather people's opinions, experiences, and stories. The meetings also offered an opportunity for the Mayor's Office on Disability (MOD) to present "Know Your Rights" training to community members, covering information about disability rights and seeking to find out how to improve communication and outreach.

A LightHouse staff member made invitational phone calls to community members, using organizational databases for clients, donors, and individuals who responded to community outreach efforts related to this project. Taxi vouchers and guided accompaniment were available for those who requested transportation assistance.

A total of 54 blind and low vision individuals attended a Wednesday meeting (November 15, 2006) at San Francisco City Hall or a Saturday meeting (November 18, 2006) at the LightHouse for the Blind. The latter meeting included chapter representatives from California Council for the Blind (CCB) and National Federation for the Blind (NFB). Both meetings were attended by a diversity of participants, representing a cross-section of San Francisco communities. Consultants observed about an equal number of male and female participants; it is estimated that about sixty percent were white, the rest were people of color. Ages were observed to range from 30s to 70s. The groups included participants with various degrees and recency of vision loss. Some but not all participants also had completed the telephone survey.

In February 2007, we held three additional focus groups. These focus groups were designed to gather the input of people who are deaf-blind (5 participants), people whose primary language is Spanish (4 participants), and young people who are blind and low vision (10 participants). The Spanish focus group and the deaf-blind focus group were interpreted. None of these participants had completed the telephone survey.

Like the leadership polls described earlier, the focus groups were led by trained facilitators following formal protocols; verbatim were notes recorded during all groups. Protocols were developed with input from a meeting with LightHouse All-Services staff and consultation with the BLVPP Steering Committee members. Each adult participant received a $10 gift card for groceries, while each youth participant received a $5 café gift card.

We used content analysis procedures to identify consistent themes within and across the focus groups. Quotations from focus group members are included throughout the body of the report to illustrate themes gleaned via analysis.

Limitations of the Focus Groups

Focus group data are qualitative, which allows more in-depth contextual assessment of key issues. At the same time, qualitative findings may be biased by the individual experiences of the participants and may not be generalizable to a larger population.

The barriers to access that leadership poll and focus group participants highlighted were also those that may have limited participation in the project, namely, transportation and communication challenges.

Areas for Further Investigation

As the first project of its kind in San Francisco, BLVPP focused on discovering the needs of blind and low vision people in relationship to their highest priority areas. More work needs to be done to research needs and recommendations for improvement in other areas. Based on prioritization by survey respondents, the Steering Committee would recommend the next assessment effort with people who are blind and low vision focus on public health and social services in San Francisco.

V. APPENDICES

A. City Information

- Disability Rights
- Mayor's Office on Disability Grievance Procedure
- City Departments List
- Focus Groups Handout – English
- Focus Groups Handout – Spanish

B. Guiding Questions

C. Census and Demographic Background Data

D. Literature Review Summary

E. Leadership Poll Summary

F. Phone Survey Summary

G. Focus Groups Summary Report

H. Focus Groups Supplemental Report

I. Instruments

- Leadership Poll Protocol
- Survey Instrument
- Focus Group Protocol
- Focus Group Protocol – Deaf-Blind
- Focus Group Protocol – Spanish
- Focus Group Protocol – Youth

APPENDIX A

City Information

- Disability Rights
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Disability Rights and the BLVPP

Information from the Mayor's Office on Disability

The City of San Francisco Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project had two goals. The first was to assess how well the City is meeting its legal requirements to provide equal access to City services and programs to -- and not discriminate against -- people who are blind and low vision. The second goal was to get input on ways to enhance access to City Services.

To those ends, the Project solicited input from members of San Francisco's blind and low vision communities about barriers they have encountered, as well as the types of methods – whether cutting edge or low-tech – that people find most useful in getting access to City services and the public areas of the city. This included soliciting information about path of travel and transportation issues.

Disability Rights- An Overview

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a comprehensive civil rights statute that protects people with disabilities from discrimination in employment, state and local government services, public accommodations, transportation and telecommunications. It builds upon and fills the gaps left by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehab Act) and the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 (FHAA). The general purpose of the ADA and the other Federal disability rights statutes is to ensure that people with disabilities are included in the mainstream of society.

Unlike other civil rights laws -- which simply require an entity to stop discriminating against the protected class -- disability rights laws, including the ADA, impose an affirmative obligation on the entity to make accommodations to facilitate access.

I. Accessibility

Access is divided into two main arenas. The first is architectural access, which has to do with providing access to the built environment. The second is

programmatic access, which requires entities to modify their policies, practices and procedures to accommodate people with disabilities. Programmatic access also requires entities to communicate equally effectively to persons with sensory disabilities (which includes people who are blind, low vision, Deaf or hard of hearing).

A. Architectural Access – The Basics

Architectural access issues of particular importance to persons who are blind or have low vision includes the following:

Clear Path of Travel in the Public Right of Way –

- No protrusions greater than 4”
- No overhangs lower than 80”
- Cane detectable rails under objects – e.g. around drinking fountains not in alcoves
- Clear barriers to dangers in construction sites on the street and sidewalk, scaffolding, trenches, along with safe, alternate paths of travel.
- Limits on where street furniture – e.g. A-frames, chairs and tables, signs, etc – can be placed in the public right of way. These obstacles may be allowed, but only if formally permitted by the Department of Public Works, and leaving a clear, level path of travel that is at least 48”wide.
- 48” wide path of travel minimum, with short stretches that can be as narrow as 36” (for obstacles such as posts, or poles).
- No unbarricaded hazardous drops, except where expected, e.g. for a curb.

In new construction or renovations:

- Tactile warnings before entering traffic at upgraded intersections and parking areas.

- Tactile Signage – not required for directional signage, it's only for the outside of the room, on the active edge of the door (opposite the hinges), centered 60" high, and nine inches laterally from the jam.

- Elevators – require audible signals and Braille, as well as lighted buttons.

The City of San Francisco Department of Public works has in place a number of policies in place to ensure that persons with disabilities, have full and unimpeded access to all City streets and sidewalks.

These policies ensure that a safe and accessible path-of-travel is provided for all pedestrians, including those with disabilities, around and/or through construction sites. Included are requirements for signage, barricades, lighting, fencing, scaffolding, etc. The City also has a policy regarding non-permitted placement of tables and chairs, news racks, etc., to prevent encroachment on the sidewalks. These policies not only reaffirm state and local access laws, but also provide specific guidance on how these laws will are to be interpreted and enforced locally.

It should be noted that there are particular limitations on the City's obligation to provide full and complete architectural access. The law says that the public entities do not have to make modifications that are either an undue burden, or are technically infeasible. In considering public rights of way for example, the City would find the cost of re-doing all of the curb ramps an undue burden ($210 million dollars) if it were to do them all in one year. Instead, the cost is spread out over 7 to 10 years.
Similarly, the City doesn't have the capacity to re-surface all of the sidewalks in the city every two years. It has therefore embarked on a rotating plan to survey, assess and fix sidewalk obstacles as noted. For now, the City still relies heavily on complaints to learn where there might be obstacles that are in need of immediate attention.

How do I ask for my rights?

If you run into a barrier or hazard on the public right of way (sidewalk, curb ramp, etc.), please let us know. The City now has one number you can call to report a curb ramp problem, a sidewalk hazard, a construction hazard, and many other issues. Just dial 311 and explain you want to report the problem, and get a case number to have the response tracked.

B. Communication & Programmatic Access

Communication Access

Communication access requires the City to take appropriate steps to ensure that communicating with people with disabilities is as effective as its communications with others. In order to accomplish this, the City is obligated to provide Auxiliary Aids and Services, which may include providing materials in large print, Braille, on tape, or on computer disk or via email.

The City would not have to provide particular Auxiliary Aids and Services if doing so would constitute a fundamental alteration or undue financial and administrative burden. An example of this might be asking the City to put the entire Administrative Code on tape (several volumes of books). Because the Administrative Code is available in electronic format, and the Public Library can help someone who is blind or low vision view or listen to the Administrative Code on its computers, that is a sufficient alternate means of access to the information.

Programmatic Access

Programmatic Access involves changes in policies, practices, procedures that enable a qualified individual with a disability the same access to City services, activities, and benefits as persons who don't have disabilities. Covered entities have an obligation to make reasonable modifications in policies, practices and procedures in order to facilitate equal access.

This might include such things as helping someone fill out a form, guiding someone to a room, providing brighter lighting in an area for someone who is low-vision, or giving someone a verbal description of a work of art. When providing "auxiliary aids and services" for people who are blind or low vision (which may also include such things as providing materials in electronic format such as Braille or large print), individuals with disabilities must be given the opportunity to request auxiliary aids and services of their choice, and primary consideration must be given to the choice expressed by the individual. "Primary consideration" means that the public entity must honor the choice, unless it can demonstrate that another equally effective means of communication is available, or that use of the means chosen would result in a fundamental alteration in the service, program, or activity, or in undue financial and administrative burdens. The City would not have to do anything that constituted a "fundamental

alteration" of the program, but in such instances would still have an obligation to provide an accommodation that would not fundamental alteration of the program.

An example of a fundamental alteration might be asking the Elections Department to help fill out tax forms for someone who is blind. Election personnel are not accountants, and taxes are not part of their program.

How do I ask for my rights?

1. Explain that you are a person with a disability, and that under the ADA you are asking for either a reasonable modification or communication access.
2. If the person you are speaking with is not helpful, ask to speak to a supervisor and explain the situation to him or her.
3. If that still gets you no results, please call the Mayor's Office on Disability – contact information below. We will help resolve the issue, and may document your experience as a formal complaint.

For additional information, please contact:
Mayor's Office on Disability
401 Van Ness, Room 300
San Francisco CA 94102
415 554-6789, TTY: 554-6799
mod@sfgov.org

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO FOR COMPLAINTS ARISING UNDER TITLE II OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990

The City and County of San Francisco has adopted a grievance procedure providing for prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging noncompliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

I. CITY FACILITIES, PROGRAMS, SERVICES OR ACTIVITIES

Complaints concerning access to City facilities, programs, services or activities should be addressed to the Mayor's Office on Disability:

ADA Compliance Officer
Mayor's Office on Disability
401 Van Ness Avenue, Room 300
San Francisco, CA 94102-6020
Voice (415) 554-6789
Fax (415) 554-6159
TTY (415) 554-6799
Email: MOD@sfgov.org

A. A complaint may be filed in writing or, when requested as an accommodation, in another format (including by telephone) that accommodates the complainant's disability. The complaint should provide the complainant's name, address and phone number, a detailed description of the incident or condition, the location, date and time of the incident.

B. Upon receipt of a complaint, the Mayor's Office on Disability will provide the appropriate department ADA Coordinator with a copy of the complaint. The departmental ADA Coordinator will then conduct an investigation. The departmental ADA Coordinator may seek assistance of the Mayor's Office on Disability and the City Attorney in investigating and responding to the complaint.

These rules contemplate informal but thorough investigations that afford the complainant a thorough review and appropriate response.

C. Within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the complaint, a written draft response will be sent to the Mayor's Office on Disability prior to the final copy, signed by the departmental ADA Coordinator and department head, being sent to the complainant.

D. The Mayor's Office on Disability will maintain a file relating to each complaint and the response thereto and will maintain that file for five years.

E. The complainant can request reconsideration of the complaint if he or she is dissatisfied with the resolution. The request for reconsideration should be addressed to the Mayor's Office on Disability in writing, or in an alternative format accessible to the complainant, within ten (10) days of the issuance of the City's response to the complaint.

F. The Mayor's Office on Disability will inform the departmental ADA Coordinator of this reconsideration request and the departmental ADA Coordinator will respond to the request for reconsideration within fifteen (15) days of receiving the request. The departmental ADA Coordinator's response must be approved by the Mayor's Office on Disability prior to being sent to the complainant. The departmental ADA Coordinator will forward a copy of the approved response to the request for reconsideration to the Mayor's Office on Disability.

G. These rules will be construed to protect the substantive rights of the complainant and assure that the City and County of San Francisco complies with Section 504 and the ADA and their implementing regulations.

II. EMPLOYMENT

Complaints alleging discrimination against applicants or employees on the basis of disability should be addressed to:

Department of Human Resources
Equal Employment Opportunity Unit
Attn: Manager for Equal Employment
Opportunity Program
44 Gough Street
San Francisco, CA 94103

(415) 557-4832 (main information)
(415) 557-4900 (Helpline)
(415) 775-9484 (TTY)

For additional information, please contact the Mayor's Office on Disability, 401 Van Ness Avenue, Room 300, San Francisco, CA 94102. Phone: 415.554-6789 voice; 415.554-6799 TTY; 415. 554-6159 fax or email MOD@sfgov.org

City and County of San Francisco
Departments and Services

1. Administrative Services – These services encompass the executive, legislative and administrative functions of the city. These relate to the day to day operation of the city.

   Functions covered under this umbrella include:
   a. Management of city buildings
   b. Collection of city taxes and fees
   c. Elections
   d. Ethics, human rights, disability and neighborhood services
   e. City planning including building inspection and building permits
   f. Public utilities
   g. City television station and city website

Elected offices included under this umbrella are:
   a. Mayor and Board of Supervisors
   a. Assessor-Recorder
   b. Treasurer-Tax Collector

2. Public Safety – These services deal with crime, emergency, fire and general safety issues.

   Functions under this umbrella include:
   a. Police and fire protection
   b. Emergency services and communications (911)
   c. Adult and juvenile probation
   d. Trial courts, public defense and public prosecution
   e. Citizen's police complaints

Elected offices under this umbrella are:
   a. District Attorney and City Attorney
   b. Public Defender

c. County Sheriff
d. Judges

3. Public Health and Social Services: These services attend to the health and well-being of the City's population with an emphasis on the most vulnerable such as the aging, disabled, homeless and persons living in extreme poverty.

   Functions under this umbrella include:
   a. City owned and operated hospitals and clinics (including S.F. General and Laguna Honda)
   b. Services to seniors and younger adults with disabilities including congregate and home delivered meals
   c. In home support services
   d. Services to children, youth and families
   e. Adult and children's protective services
   f. Homeless services including shelters
   g. City welfare office including food stamps
   h. Substance abuse and behavioral health
   i. Animal care and control

4. Arts and recreation: These services relate to quality of life issues such as art, education, recreation, and information access.

   Functions under this umbrella include:
   a. City sponsored public and performing arts (including the opera, symphony and ballet).
   b. City owned and operated museums.
   c. Public library system and specialized libraries such as the Law Library.
   d. City owned and operated parks and recreation centers.
   e. The public zoo.

5. Housing: this includes public housing and private housing regulated by the City.

   Functions include:
   a. Mayor's office on housing
   b. Rent control board
   c. Redevelopment agency
   d. Building inspection and permits that relate to the city housing stock
   e. ADA regulations that relate to the city housing stock
   f. Supportive housing for the disabled, elderly and homeless populations
   g. Homeless shelters and emergency shelters

6. Public transportation, travel and pathways: this covers all the means and avenues of travel throughout the city by vehicles and pedestrians.

   Functions include:
   a. Muni and Muni Metro System
   b. Paratransit
   c. Taxi regulation
   d. Traffic management
   e. City parking meters, city parking facilities and oversight of private parking facilities
   f. Sidewalks and pedestrian crossings
   g. Public works
   h. Building inspection as it relates to access to public and private facilities
   i. Travel to and from San Francisco International Airport and access within the facility
   j. Access to facilities of the Port of San Francisco
   k. Disability access to public and private facilities

Mayor's Office on Disability Complaint Line

(415) 554-6789

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act you have the right to alternative formats from any government agency for information that that agency is providing to the public. Alternative formats include Braille, large print, audio tape and electronic formats that may be played on a computer.

Suggested statement:

"I am a person with a disability and under the Americans with Disabilities Act I am asking for a reasonable modification.

or

I am asking for alternative formats so that I can read and understand what you are giving me."

Línea De Quejas De La Alcadia

(415) 554-6789

Bajo el Acta de Americanos con Discapacidades, Usted tiene el derecho de recibir información de parte de cualquier agencia gubernamental en formatos alternativos. Formatos alternativos incluyen, Braille, Imprenta Grande, Cinta de Audio y Formatos Electrónicos que se puedan oír a través de una computadora.

Declaración Sugerida:

"Yo soy una persona discapacitada, y bajo el Acta de Americanos con Discapacidades estoy pidiendo una modificación razonable.

O

"Estoy pidiendo formatos alternativos para así poder leer y comprender lo que Usted me esta entregando".

APPENDIX B

Guiding Questions

Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project

Original Guiding Questions

- What are the best means to make public art (in museums and the public right of way) accessible to people with visual disabilities?
- What are the current and future preferred modes of voting for the Blind and Low Vision (BLV) community?
- What is the preferred means to receive information about City services, benefits and activities?
- What is level of knowledge of disability rights in the BLV community?
- What is the preferred mode of way-finding in the BLV community?
- What features and approaches are best for the BLV community in an emergency or disaster?

Additional Notes:

The Steering Committee has agreed that initial discussions with leaders in blind and low vision communities will address six areas of city services:

- Housing
- Public health and social services
- Public paths and travel
- Public safety and emergency services
- Arts and recreation
- Administrative services and civic participation

Questions will be asked of the community on at least three levels:

- Do you know about the services?
- Do you use the service and what is your experience with it?
- How would you prioritize the service as to its level of importance to you?

APPENDIX C

Census and Demographic Background Data

AVAILABLE VISION IMPAIRMENT AND DISABILITY PREVALENCE DATA
March 2006

Race - National
Prevalence by race among individuals in the United States in 1992 who are blind or visually impaired:

In 1992, among individuals who are blind or visually impaired in the United States:
White: 80%
Black or African American: 18%
All other races: 2%
Source: Statistics and Sources for Professionals, 2005 American Foundation for the Blind. www.afb.org

For comparison, in the Census 2000 national census:
White: 75.1%
Black or African American: 12.3%
American Indian and Alaskan Native: 0.9%
Asian: 3.6%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 0.1%
Some Other Race: 5.5%
Two or more races: 2.4%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race): 12.5%

In the 2004 American Community Survey for San Francisco, CA:
White: 52.6%
Black or African American: 6.5%
American Indian and Alaskan Native: 0.3%
Asian: 33.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 0.5%
Some Other Race: 3.8%
Two or more races: 3.0%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race): 14.0%

See below for prevalence data by race and sex among people over age 40 in California.

Age - National
Percentage by age of persons with a self-reported vision impairment.

National age distribution among people with a self-reported vision impairment:
Under 17: 0.6%
18 to 44: 2.4%
45 to 64: 15%
65 to 74: 17%
75 and up: 26%
Source: Statistics on Vision Impairment: A Resource Manual, April 2002 www.lighthouse.org

National age distribution from Census 2000 data:
Under 19: 21.4%
20 to 44: 44.1%
45 to 64: 22.0%
65 to 74: 6.5%
75 and up: 5.9%

From NIH—Prevalence of Blindness and Low Vision Among Adults 40 Years and Older in the United States:
40 to 49: 0.3%
50 to 59: 0.4%
60 to 69: 1.2%
70 to 79: 3.8%
> 80 years: 23.7%
Total: 2.7% (all vision impaired)
Source: "Prevalence of Blindness Data" from Archives of Opthalmology, Volume 1122, April 2004 as presented on the National Eye Institute (NIH) website: www.nei.nih.gov/eyedata/pbd_tables.asp accessed 3/21/06

From the National Eye Institute (NIH) website www.nei.nih.gov/eyedata/pdf/vpus_usmap.pdf accessed 3/21/06:
Estimated prevalence rate of vision impairment and blindness for persons age 40 and older in California: 2.69%
Estimated prevalence rate of vision impairment and blindness overall in the U.S. population: 2.85%

Sex - California
Percentage by sex of people with any disability in 2004. Source: 2004 Disability Status Reports California. www.disabilitystatistics.org

In 2004, among people with any disability in California:
Male: 48%
Female: 52%

From Census 2000 in California:
Male: 49.8%
Female: 50.2%

See below for prevalence data by race and sex among people over age 40 in California.

Educational attainment for the population 25 years and over - National
Educational attainment in 1992-1993, for individuals with a severe visual impairment or blindness. Source: Statistics and Sources for Professionals, 2005 American Foundation for the Blind. www.afb.org

Less High School: 55%
High School/ Equivalency : Not available
Some College: 24%
Bachelor Degree +: 16%

Household Income - National
The average annual earnings of individuals with a visual impairment or severe visual impairment compared to persons without disabilities. Source: Statistics on Vision Impairment: A Resource Manual, April 2002 www.lighthouse.org

31% lower annual earning for individuals with a VI compared to individuals without disabilities.
37% lower annual earning for individuals with a severe VI compared to individuals without disabilities

Employment Status (Civilian 20 years of age +) - National
Employment status among persons who are visually impaired or severely visually impaired age 21-64 in 1997. Source: Statistics on Vision Impairment: A Resource Manual, April 2002. www.lighthouse.org

Employed: 42% VI; 30% Severe VI
Unemployed: 59% VI; 70% Severe VI

Overall disability for the civilian non-institutionalized population 5 years and over - California

Census 2000 for San Francisco, CA shows 20.3% overall disability, as compared to 19.3% in the US (for persons age 5 and older). Accessed 3/21/06.

Census 2000 for California shows 19.2% overall people with a disability status, as compared to 19.3% in the US (for persons age 5 and older). Accessed 3/21/06.

2004 Disability Status California. (www.disabilitystatistics.org) reports the overall percentage of people with a disability in 2004 in California as 10.5%

Race & Sex - California

Category	VI Individuals aged 40 and over in CA	Total Population aged 40 and over in CA
Female	63.8%	52.7%
Male	36.2%	47.3%
White	71.8%	60.6%
Black	4.8%	6.0%
Hispanic	13.1%	19.5%
Other Race	10.3%	13.9%
White Female	47.2%	31.8%
Black Female	2.9%	3.2%
Hispanic Female	7.7%	10.2%
Other Race Female	6.0%	7.5%
White Male	24.6%	28.8%
Black Male	1.8%	2.8%
Hispanic Male	5.4%	9.3%
Other Race Male	4.4%	6.4%

Data on ESTIMATED NUMBER OF VISION IMPAIRED INDIVIDUALS (INCLUDING BLIND) IN THE US POPULATION AGED 40 AND OVER BY STATE, RACE, AND SEX, last updated October 2004, from the National Eye Institute (NIH) website www.nei.nih.gov/eyedatatables.asp and accessed 3/21/06. Compared with Census 2000 data for California population aged 40 and over overall. Individuals who are white and female are over-represented among vision impaired individuals aged 40 and over in California, as compared to the general population.

APPENDIX D

Literature Review Summary

LightHouse for the Blind
Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project
Summary Report on Literature Review
June 2006

At the start of the Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project (BLVPP), we conducted a literature search and review. Our purpose was to locate research that might inform our project design and implementation. Although the BLVPP is more focused in its scope than a broad needs assessment would be, we specifically hoped to determine whether other entities have conducted assessments related to public services to people who are blind or low vision. We searched for relevant publications of the past ten years, from 1995-2006, using electronic databases, in addition to doing a general Internet search for related articles or projects.

We found that most of the available literature related to blindness addresses medical and rehabilitation needs of blind or low vision people, or it relates to the provision of social or medical services, rather than tackling needs and priorities related to navigating and accessing public services. Furthermore, it was challenging to find studies that focused on blind or low vision people rather than people with disabilities more generally. Still, we were able to identify over a dozen articles, projects, and local studies that provided context or spoke to some aspect of the Blind and Vision Priorities Project.

This summary report presents the highlights from the review that will be used to shape and interpret the Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project. An annotated list of the most relevant literature reviewed and a list of our search terms and databases searched are attached with this report.

One useful conceptual framework is that of the “livable community” for people who are blind and low vision. Specifically, Gerber & Kirchner (2003) seek to define criteria for what makes communities livable for people in the US who are blind and low vision. Similarly, the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) has a participatory online project that is devoted to collecting criteria for what makes a community “livable.” And the National Council on Disability (NCD) also uses a livable community framework to report on model communities and initiatives that address the needs of people with disabilities, and to make recommendations in the areas of housing; transportation; the physical environment; work, volunteer, and education opportunities; health and support services; and civic and cultural participation.

Interestingly, these explorations located accessible and available transportation at the top of the list of criteria for livable communities. Gerber & Kirchner (2003) found that, “Transportation was rated the number one, most important feature affecting livability, and that priority held true across the lifespan,” followed by affordable housing and jobs. The AFB reports on its website that “the most important feature that makes a community more or less livable was… the availability of public transportation.” Similarly, open-ended phone interviews by Maxson, Cavenaugh & Butler (2000) with North Carolinans who are blind or visually impaired identified their greatest areas of need as transportation and employment, in both rural and urban areas. The California Statewide Independent Living Needs Assessment, 2003-04 (Stoddard & Ripple, 2005), found that the top “need categories” for people with vision disabilities included (in

order): health care, transportation, health insurance, disability rights, and housing.

Another compelling, if not surprising, theme in the literature is the importance of age in any consideration of needs among people who are blind and low vision. The most significant finding of Cherry, Keller & Dudley (1991), who surveyed participants from ages 3 to 98 years, is that age-related differences are relevant in planning and providing services for persons with visual impairments, and that age impacts "the need for assistance with activities for daily living." Gerber & Kirchner (2003) also discuss the importance of adopting a "life stage" framework. Williams, De l'Aune, Blasch & Watson (accessed 03/29/06), in their assessment of veterans who are visually impaired found an average age above 70 years and concluded that age plays a significant role in their findings. As Zuckerman (2004) points out, most blind adults in the US are older than the general population, with an average age of 62 years and one-third over age 75 years. Lee & Brennan (2003) found, among older adults who are visually impaired, that both race/ethnicity and educational attainment are significant in the ways that they experience their disability and how they adapt by accessing services and seeking support.

Demographic characteristics of people who are blind and low vision that were significant in the literature we reviewed include: age, as discussed above; economic status (Houtenville, 2003; Zuckerman, 2004,); degree of visual impairment (Houtenville, 2003); race/ethnicity (Lee & Brennan, 2003; Maxson, Cavenaugh & Butler, 2000); educational attainment (Lee & Brenan, 2003;

Zuckerman, 2004); and employment status (Zuckerman, 2004). Various studies also collected other characteristics, including: marital status, veteran status, gender, household composition, and current health status.

We did not locate any studies addressing the place-based prioritization of areas of public services that the BLVPP seeks to accomplish. The closest examples include:

- Cherry, Keller & Dudley (1991) surveyed people who are blind and low vision in eight Atlanta area counties. Their findings primarily are related to planning and providing social services for older adults
- Maxson, Cavenaugh & Butler (2000) used several data sources, including a mail survey and phone interviews, to assess the needs of North Carolinas who are blind or visually impaired, related to vision rehabilitation services. Many of their findings are most closely related to rehabilitation issues related to employment and independent living, yet open-ended phone interviews invited a broader assessment of needs.
- The California Statewide Independent Living Needs Assessment, 2003-04 (Stoddard & Ripple, 2005), covers a statewide geography and the overall population of people with disabilities. The project included a “Sacramento Public Forum on Issues of Concern to People who are Blind or Visually Impaired,” in February 2004. It also presents the order of “need categories” for people with vision disabilities.
- A study is currently underway to assess the needs of people who are blind and visually impaired in Cornwall, England. The researchers have offered

to share their survey instrument when it becomes available in a format that easily can be transmitted electronically.

Other, more local studies also informed the original proposal and design for this study, including: an assessment and planning study by the LightHouse and the Hearing Society and funded by The California Endowment, regarding sensory loss technical assistance program for senior service providers; the San Francisco DPT CBO Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Progress Summary Report, to identify intersections and walking paths that pose problems for blind and visually impaired people; and a Deaf Community Needs Assessment.

These studies primarily have been useful to inform the BLVPP methodology, as they raise issues related to the importance of data collection in multiple languages and the challenges of reaching older adult participants and other outreach strategies. Other studies we reviewed also offer additional methodological insights, and, in some cases, examples of instruments. Data collection methods used include: analysis of existing data sets; surveys, including both mail and phone surveys; key informant interviews; focus groups and/or public forums.

APPENDIX E

Leadership Poll Summary

LightHouse for the Blind
Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project
Summary Report on Leadership Polls
June 2006

In April and May 2006, the Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project held three focus group discussions at the LightHouse for the Blind with informants who are blind and low vision. The total number of participants in these "leadership polls" was 10 people, including LightHouse board members, staff, and leaders from other community groups.

The dual purpose of the groups was: (1) to ask participants about their priorities related to improving the accessibility of city services and (2) to get their input about how to approach broader communities of people who are blind and low vision about their priorities related to city services.

This brief summary report presents key findings from the three focus groups. The first section presents findings in the area of Public Pathways and Travel; the second section addresses Information Access; the third includes other findings, related to arts and recreation and disability rights; and the report concludes with Notes on Methodology, Limitations and Strengths.

Across the groups, public pathways and travel is the area of city services that participants flagged as their highest priority. Every participant chose this as one of their top two priority issues, and most requested additional time to discuss issues related to getting around, way-finding, and transportation. In other key areas, participants urged additional awareness or sensitivity training for city employees about providing services for people who are blind low vision. They also made suggestions about how to improve dissemination of information to people who are blind and low vision about city services, benefits, and activities.

I. Public Paths and Travel

In this area, we explored means by which public pathways and travel might be made more accessible for people who are blind or low vision. Topics included Talking Signs™ and Audible Pedestrian Signals. Participants reported mixed experiences with Talking Signs™. On the other hand, participants reported that

Audible Pedestrian Signals should be a higher priority. Participants also offered their suggestions regarding other solutions for way-finding.

All three groups devoted most of their comments to the issue of public paths and travel and indicated that they would like to have more opportunities to discuss travel and transportation access.

- "If you don't have a safe path of travel or a consistent path of travel that you can use as a blind person, it's kind of hard to access the other things on the list."
- "I assume that housing and health care are problems, because they are always problems in urban areas. But personally, the things that affect me most have to do with travel."

Talking Signs™

Participants' concerns about Talking Signs™ are related to the requirement of carrying additional technology that limits hands-free navigation. Participants emphasized the importance of having at least one hand free, especially if they also are using a cane or dog. Others indicated that they might be willing to carry something or would find Talking Signs™ more useful if the technology were more prevalent.

- "'Joe Public' is a lot more helpful than Talking Signs™ for me!"
- "Talking Signs™ are not that useful unless they are ubiquitous."
- "I prefer not to carry anything. I carry enough stuff already."
- "You're carrying extra stuff anyway, and that's one more apparatus you need to bring…. Audible Pedestrian Signs (APS) are more useful."
- "There's no reason to carry [Talking Signs™ technology] if you're not going to use it often."

A few participants said they have had positive experiences with Talking Signs™.

- "My experiences with Talking Signs™ have tended to be pretty positive, at the Library and at City Hall."
- "I love Talking Signs™. I use them anytime they're there."

Audible Pedestrian Signals (APS)

All participants appreciated Audible Pedestrian Signals for way-finding. There was some discussion about how APS or Talking Signs™ could be used both outdoors and indoors.

- "APS may be better in outside situations and Talking Signs™ can be useful inside."
- "I would prefer audible signals for restrooms, important corridors, exits. Technology has advanced since Talking Signs™."

Participants also made a number of suggestions for improvement related to APS. Primarily, they encouraged the City to increase and speed up the installation of audible signals and to ensure consistency and standardization of the audible signal technology.

An additional suggestion is to install audible signals in the middle of large intersections, on the intersection "island."

- "I'm legally blind, and it astounds me that there are not more audible signals on wide busy streets like Geary Boulevard or Van Ness or the Embarcadero. They benefit everyone – legally and totally blind, as well as elderly people with vision loss who have good days and bad days due to glare, etc. The signs are hard to see, and the City needs to take a look at areas that are around important buildings such as Kaiser, City Hall, Davies Symphony Hall, DPH and other places that elderly people frequent."
- "Audible signals are a need for safety; pathways need to be marked. They say that it will cost a lot and take a lot of time. It should be speeded up."
- "I have a complaint with audible signals in the City. Every audible signal is different and since I'm totally blind I have to see what type of signal it is before I can rely on it. The buttons are shaped different, the way the buttons are facing is different, I always have to figure out what to press and what sounds I'm waiting for. I love the ones that make tick sounds to locate the audible signal box. Otherwise, I don't know it's there. I have to go up the curb, then go back to find the button, then find the curb again. They should standardize them."

- "APS works where there are four corners with right angle crosswalks."

Other Way-finding Solutions

We also asked participants to suggest other solutions to improve the accessibility of public pathways for people who are blind or low vision. They suggested: minimizing technological "gadgets," combining tactile guide trips with other methods, seeking self-explanatory accommodations, and applying the principle of "universal design" so that accommodations benefit the greatest number of people and not only those who are blind or low vision. They also urged more funding for community organizations, like the LightHouse and service organizations such as senior centers, to provide Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Training for a greater number of people.

- "Less [additional technology to carry] is better. You have to focus on so many things when you're traveling. The combination of a GPS on a Pocket PC might be okay."
- "The fewer things I have in my pocket or backpack the better. I don't want an extra gadget for my mobility."
- "In conjunction with the crosswalk railroad crossings, the [raised, tactile guide] strips would be useful. The high contrast is good for people with low vision and the tactile is good for the totally blind."
- "I like the idea of [guide] strips. Many times I've often thought they would be good if I veer out of the cross walk."
- "The best kind of accommodation is self-explanatory. The first strategy is always the one that works without you 'having gotten the memo.' The second one is to look at the stake holders and see who can get in touch with the most people."
- "Universal design. The talking bus will help people with cognitive problems, people from out of town, or even if the bus is crowded and you just can't see the street sign!"

One unanticipated finding related to this discussion is that each individual participant shared the creative personal accommodations they have developed to adapt to the challenges of travel.

II. Information Access

Most leadership poll participants use a combination of methods for getting information about city services, activities, and benefits. These include: the Internet, with screen reader or screen enlargement technology such as Zoomtext and JAWS for accessible sites; asking a sighted partner to read printed materials to them; listening to periodicals on tape; accessing local news on the radio or TV; and/or calling City departments for more information. One participant said, “I like braille, but it’s hard to get.”

Participants emphasized the importance of relevant information, touching on gaps in information about public services that are available and the challenges of getting information about services out to people so they don’t miss out on services that are their right.

- “People aren’t necessarily accessing the things they could be, if they are not hooked up with social services.”
- “Many people are not networked into agencies and don’t know about services.”
- “Don’t give me information I don’t want, even if it’s accessible.”

A key finding related to getting information is the “human factor” in accessing city services. While they generally prefer getting assistance from a “live” person directly, almost all of the participants shared stories, humorous and painful, about the challenges of seeking information or assistance.

For example, one of the Asian American participants, who speaks English, was provided with a Chinese language interpreter when he asked for assistance reading health services materials. As another participant explained, “Bus drivers—they get a training and then the knowledge is gone. They still grab my dog’s harness. It’s hard to get to their mind if they’re not in your shoes.” These stories echo the question another participant asked: “How do you teach people awareness?”

Confidentiality of personal information and documents is another concern. One participant explained, “One of the things I’ve had to do a bunch of times is fill out a form with a stranger who gets to know things like when my last period was, or

what my political affiliations are. It's having the customer service skills so that's not a big deal, so confidentiality is taken into account."

Participants also gave specific examples of the importance of signage and information related to using public transportation and in hospitals.

- "Signage should be large, with good contrast, and more eye level. They should mark streets more clearly where a bus stop is, or have an audible bus stop announcing the bus number…. MUNI – you don't know where they stop, especially in outer, less busy areas. A lot of bus stops don't have bus shelters. They should lower the numbers or make them larger."
- "Finding your way through a hospital is very difficult. There is no one to ask [for help]."

Other specific areas that participants highlighted as especially impacted by issues related to accessible print formats include voter information and taxes.

Solutions

Participants suggested solutions for the City to improve access to information for people who are blind and low vision. Across groups, they suggested more training for city employees about how to answer questions and assist people with disabilities. They pointed out that communication issues and training of staff would become even more crucial in a disaster situation, such as an earthquake.

- "The City could incorporate disability awareness and sensitivity to blindness training and information for city employees into an ADA awareness day."
- "The Police department, MUNI drivers, BART agents, firemen, and City departments… all need more training and education."

All agreed that phone menus and staffed information desks are particularly useful; as mentioned above, most prefer speaking directly with a person to get information.

III. Other Findings

Arts & Recreation

In the second and third leadership groups, participants addressed the importance of arts and recreation. In the second group, all participants said that access to the arts and recreation are important, whereas members of the third group made a distinction between arts and recreation. As one person in this group said, “We should separate arts and recreation. I have a low interest in the arts. I have a high interest in recreation…. Arts are a low priority for me because there’s not enough information telling me what I’m standing in front of.” Another person added, “That’s where recreation has an advantage. In the Park, you can smell the flowers and have other sensory experiences.”

Participants in both groups reported that they particularly appreciate tactile exhibits. As one person said, “That’s what’s difficult about being in a museum – you can’t touch anything. I lose that sense of whatever the artist was trying to get at, if you can’t touch it. If I could just get an idea by feeling or touching, I’d be happy.” They also appreciate “access days,” and audio-described docent tours. Participants clarified, however, that the appropriate form of accommodation, e.g., audio description versus docent tour, would depend upon the individual.

Accessibility and accommodation to the arts were concerns for the participants. As one person said, “I would like to have more access to the arts. This is a world-class city and people who are blind and low vision should have the opportunity to explore and enjoy what’s here.” A very specific suggestion related to information access that came out of this conversation was, “The City should have information on their website for arts programs for people with disabilities. That would be a start.”

Disability Rights

The second and third groups also addressed the level of knowledge of disability rights among people who are blind and low vision. All participants reported that there is a low level of knowledge of disability rights among the general community, although they tended to report their own knowledge level as either “high” or “medium”. One participant suggested that age and employment status

might impact this, saying, “If someone is younger or working or trying to get a job, they might be more savvy about their rights.” They also emphasized that knowledge of disability rights is a two way street, saying, for example, “City employees also need to know the ADA, not just us.”

IV. Notes on Methodology, Limitations, and Strengths

Focus groups with key informants followed formal protocols, with verbatim notes taken during all three groups. Protocols for the key informant focus groups and calls were developed with input from a meeting with LightHouse All-Services staff, as well as from consultation with the BLVPP Steering Committee members. For example, the LightHouse All-Services staff highlighted communications and transportation as key issues. They made connections between transportation and way-finding, as inseparable issues, and talked about the link between communications, information access, and emergency services. We adjusted the focus group protocol after the first group so that the straw poll prioritization exercise came at the end of the discussion rather than at the beginning. Copies of the final protocol is included below.

Because of the qualitative approach and small and context-specific sample sizes, it may not be possible to generalize findings beyond these respondents.

Ultimately, the same barriers to access that participants highlighted were those that limited participation in the leadership polls, namely transportation and communication challenges. One specific caveat raised by participants is that they represent a group of “independent travelers,” and that people who are blind or low vision who do not travel independently might have different priorities.

Along similar lines, this is a group of informants identified by the LightHouse who may not be representative of San Francisco blind and low vision communities in many ways, including age, race/ethnicity, and income level. As one participant pointed out, ensuring greater participation is a broader, ongoing challenge related to working in these communities, saying, “I see the same people in many of the meetings and focus groups. You would think there are only two dozen blind people.”

LightHouse All-Services staff also presented the dimension of age differences, pointing out that senior adults and youth who are blind or low vision would have different priorities based on their needs. For example, issues of recreation, employment, and education may increase in importance among younger people who are blind and low vision.

Informing Project Design

Focus group participants made suggestions about specific questions to include in the telephone survey and shared their ideas for methods of outreach to the larger community. Their suggestions are being incorporated into the project and survey design. Additional, individual telephone interviews with informants who were unable to attend the group discussions are in process and will complete the leadership poll findings.

APPENDIX F

Phone Survey Summary

Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project
Telephone Survey Summary Report

LightHouse for the Blind
Mayor's Office on Disabilities

Prepared by Rachel Lanzerotti Consulting
September 2006

I. Introduction & Overview

In January 2006, the LightHouse for the Blind (LightHouse) and the San Francisco Mayor's Office on Disabilities (MOD) launched a year-long, multifaceted, community research project. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, the Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project (BLVPP) seeks community input regarding priorities for improving the accessibility of San Francisco city services for people who are blind and low vision. The project is guided by the BLVPP Steering Committee, which is composed of the Directors and Management Staff of the LightHouse for the Blind and the Mayor's Office on Disability.

At the start of the project, we completed a ten-year literature search and review to inform our project design and implementation, which included searching for comparable demographic data. In April and May 2006, we conducted individual interviews with selected key informants and held three "leadership polls," or discussion groups with LightHouse board members, staff, and leaders from other community groups. The dual purpose of the focus groups was to ask participants about their priorities related to improving the accessibility of city services and to get their input about how to approach broader communities of people who are blind and low vision about their priorities related to city services.

This summary report presents findings from the community telephone survey we conducted in August 2006. The purpose of this survey was to gather quantitative data regarding the practices, preferences, and priorities of people who are blind and low vision, related to accessing city services in San Francisco. These include San Francisco city services in the areas of: administrative services; arts and recreation; housing; public health and social services; public safety and emergency services; and public transportation, travel, and pathways. The survey results will be used to help inform a series of community meetings of people who are blind and low vision. All of the information about community priorities that we gather using this variety of methods will be compiled into a final report in early 2007, which may then be used to help define city policy and assist city programs

Report Content

The report is divided into sections that are organized into major areas of inquiry, and generally follow the order of questions in the survey instrument, as follows:

II. Summary of Key Findings

This section offers a brief summary of key findings from the BLVPP telephone survey, as presented in more detail in the sections below.

Methods & Respondent Characteristics

We completed 228 telephone surveys with blind and low vision adults who reside in San Francisco or visit the City at least twice annually, with a survey response rate of 32.4%.

Three-quarters of survey respondents live in San Francisco. Fifty-three percent of respondents are female, and forty-seven percent are male. The mean age of respondents is 64 years, with an age range from 18 to 97 years. Fifty-four percent of respondents are Caucasian/White, and seventeen percent are African American/Black. Seven percent are Latino/a or Hispanic, six percent are Asian, and three percent are Biracial/Multiracial. Forty percent of respondents reported an individual annual income under $15,000. About sixty percent of respondents identify themselves as Low Vision, and just below forty percent identify as Blind.

Getting Around in San Francisco: Walking, Navigating Public Buildings & Public Transportation

About sixty percent of respondents who walk in San Francisco would find audible signals at crosswalks most helpful for navigation when walking. One-third reported that they would find raised bumps on street corners most helpful, and just over one-quarter said would find tactile strips to follow on the sidewalk most helpful.

When they are finding their way in San Francisco, about half of the survey respondents reported that it's best for them to receive information "through audio broadcasts or other audible information," and of these respondents, almost half would prefer "routine audio broadcasts every few seconds."

When navigating inside city government buildings, almost eighty percent of respondents said they prefer personal assistance (i.e., from staff or a help desk). Half of the survey respondents also prefer informational technology (i.e., such as Talking Signs™ with receivers located on site) for getting around inside public buildings.

Among all respondents, just seven percent reported that they have used a tactile evacuation sign. In contrast, above seventy percent of respondents said that they would find automatic audio announcements most useful for finding exits in an emergency, and almost seventy percent of respondents would find staff assistance in exiting the building safely most useful. One-third of respondents would find directions in large print most useful for finding emergency exits.

Seventy-three percent of those surveyed who use public transportation in San Francisco, would find "'talking' buses or MUNI trains" most useful. Over half of respondents who use public transportation in San Francisco said they would find most useful "a driver who is helpful and freely gives information," while about one quarter of respondents would find most useful "bus stops or MUNI trains stops that announce what bus is coming." There were no significant differences between blind and low vision respondents related to public transportation.

Forty-three percent of respondents who walk in San Francisco reported that they "always" or "often" encounter intrusions into their path of travel. Blind participants more frequently encounter intrusions into their path of travel. About sixty percent of blind respondents "always" or "often" encounter intrusions into their path of travel, as compared with one-third of low vision respondents.

Information & Communications

For receiving information from San Francisco departments about city services, benefits, and activities, the greatest proportions of survey respondents preferred "talking to a city official on the phone" and "large print by mail."

Among respondents who reported that it was "somewhat important," "important," or "very important" to them to experience public art exhibits, over half said they would prefer to do so "through an audio description at the site where the art is located," including "wearing personal headphones to receive an audible description."

Disability Rights

Sixty-four percent of respondents reported that they were not aware that they have the right to ask staff of city programs to provide information in an alternative format. Sixty-six percent of respondents said that they did not know they "could call the Mayor's Office on Disabilities to complain if your rights are not being met."

Respondents over age 60 years and female respondents are less likely to have asked for assistance to access SF city services compared to other respondents, and older respondents are less likely to be aware that they can call the MOD if their rights are not being met.

Prioritizing Improved Accessibility of City Services

Transportation, travel, and public pathways received the highest score among respondents who ranked the importance of improving accessibility for people who are blind or low vision in each of six areas of San Francisco city services. Moreover, the greatest proportion of respondents selected "public transportation, travel, and pathways" as their top priority for the City to improve and increase access for people who are blind or low vision. Those who selected this area as their top priority were most likely to do so because they "use services in this area most frequently." There were no significant differences between blind and low vision respondents' priorities related to city services.

III. Methodology

This section describes the research methods used, with information about the sampling plan, survey instrument, response rate, approach to data analysis, and strengths and limitations of the research design.

Sampling Plan

Drawing from its organizational databases, the LightHouse generated a list of community members, clients, donors, and individuals who responded to outreach efforts related to this project. Only individuals for whom phone numbers were available were selected for the sample. The LightHouse engaged professional telephone surveyors, The Henne Group (THG), with the capacity to use trained interviewers and a 12-station Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system.

We requested that THG stratify the sample by gender, with equal representation of men and women. We also stratified the sample to include only names with telephone numbers in the following Bay Area telephone area codes: 415, 510, 650, 925, and 707. We limited participation eligibility to those who self-identified as blind, low vision, and/or visually impaired; to those who either reside in San Francisco or visit San Francisco at least twice a year, with a target of 80% San Francisco residents; and to respondents over age 18 years.

THG made up to five attempts to contact each member of the sample. Due to budget and time constraints, interviews were conducted in English with hearing individuals. THG completed interviews with individuals whose primary languages are other than English, if both interviewer and subject could be understood.

Survey Instrument

The BLVPP Steering Committee, composed of the Directors and Management Staff of the LightHouse for the Blind and the Mayor's Office on Disability, developed a 20-minute survey instrument based on a literature review and on findings from several leadership polls held in April and May 2006. Additional staff from the LightHouse and the MOD reviewed a draft instrument prior to pilot testing.

Prior to launching the survey, THG conducted a paper-and-pencil pilot test of the draft survey instrument with 11 completed interviews. This test sample included English-speaking, hearing individuals who responded to outreach efforts and others randomly selected from the LightHouse databases. The BLVPP Steering Committee, in consultation with THG, reviewed the pilot test results and made final revisions to the survey instrument and sampling plan.

Response Rate

THG attempted multiple calls to a sample of 1,235 individuals. Of these, 228 interviews were completed. Based on the disposition of completed, ineligible, unknown, or refused interviews, and using the CASRO (Council of American Research Organizations) method, the simple response rate is calculated as 32.4%.

Data Analysis

The CATI process involves data input directly into a database in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. We cleaned and recoded data as necessary for analysis and ran the overall frequency or response to each question. Following review by the BLVPP Steering Committee, we ran multivariate analysis (i.e., cross-tabulations), using chi-square tests of independence to explore whether comparisons of responses were statistically significant. The results from chi-square tests are noted in this report with a χ^2 symbol, followed by a p-value showing the level of statistical significance for the test. The p-value represents confidence level or margin of error, thus a smaller p-value indicates greater significance. In general, we used the 95% confidence level, or 5% margin of error, ($p=.05$) to determine significance. This report includes only statistically significant findings ($p \leq .05$) from the multivariate analysis.

Limitations and Strengths

We are aware of specific biases in the survey sample. Those who responded to the survey may have been more motivated than those who did not respond. Also, the databases from which we drew the sample represent those who already are connected to the LightHouse and therefore may not be entirely representative of people in San Francisco who are blind and low vision.

Based on available comparable data, the sample appears to reflect what is known about the general population of people who are blind or visually impaired, especially in terms of race. Taking into consideration the diversity of San Francisco communities, however, there may be some under-representation in the survey sample among Latinos and perhaps Asian/Pacific Islanders, perhaps because the survey was conducted in English.

The wording and order of survey questions may have influenced responses. The instrument was designed with underlying assumptions based in literature review and the leadership polls, specifically the assumption that transportation and communication barriers are significant concerns among communities of people who are blind and low vision.

The survey instrument was designed with input and expertise of the BLVPP Steering Committee members, as well as based on findings from literature review and community leadership polls. The draft instrument was pilot tested prior to launch and revised accordingly.

IV. Respondent Characteristics

This section describes characteristics of those who responded to the survey.

Three-quarters (75.9%) of survey respondents live in San Francisco. Table 1 below summarizes respondent characteristics from 228 completed interviews:

Table 1
Respondent Characteristics

Gender (n=228)	Female = 52.6% Male = 47.4%	
Age (n=223)	Average Age = 64 years Age Range = 18 to 97 years	
Age Groupings (n=228)	18 to 29 years old	4.4%
	30 to 39 years old	3.9%
	40 to 49 years old	11.0%
	50 to 59 years old	21.1%
	60 to 69 years old	14.9%
	70 to 79 years old	18.0%
	80 to 89 years old	20.6%
	90 or older	3.9%
	Declined to state	2.2%
Race / Ethnicity (n=228)	Caucasian/White	53.5%
	African American/Black	17.1%
	Latino/a or Hispanic	7.0%
	Asian	6.1%
	Biracial/Multiracial	2.6%
	American Indian/Native American	1.3%
	Southeast Asian	1.3%
	Arab/Middle Eastern	0.9%
	African/Afro-Caribbean	0.4%
	Other	3.1%
	Declined to state	6.6%
Individual Annual Income (n=228)	Under $15,000	40.4%
	$15,000 to $29,999	22.4%
	$30,000 to $49,999	8.8%
	Above $50,000	8.4%
	Declined to state	20.2%

* The sum of the percentages may be slightly less or greater than 100% due to rounding.

Sixty percent (59.6%) of respondents identify themselves as Low Vision, and thirty-seven percent (37.3%) identify as Blind. Another 3.1% refused to choose one of these options and gave other responses, including: "visually impaired," "very low vision," "borderline between blind and low vision," and "blind in one eye; low vision in the other." Survey analysis showed some statistically significant differences in the responses of Blind participants as compared with Low Vision participants, which are noted in the sections below.

Fifty-three percent (52.6%) of respondents are Female, and forty-seven percent (47.4%) are Male. There are some differences of response by gender, which are noted in the sections below. Gender and age are related: respondents over age 80 are slightly more likely to be female (33.3% female as compared to 29.5% male), and those under age 40 are more likely to be male (27.7% male as compared to 13.7% female).

The mean age of respondents is 64 years, with an age range from 18 to 97 years. The median (or "typical") age is 65 years. One-fifth of the group is ages 50 to 59 years, while another fifth is ages 80 to 89 years, (n=223). Survey analysis showed some statistically significant differences in response based on age, which are noted in the sections below.

Fifty-four percent (53.5%) of respondents are Caucasian/White, and seventeen percent (17.1%) are African American/Black. Seven percent (7%) are Latino/a or Hispanic, six percent (6.1%) are Asian, and three percent (2.6%) are Biracial/Multiracial.

Forty percent (40.4%) of respondents reported an individual annual income under $15,000. We explored whether there was a relationship between respondents' income and their survey responses. No clear patterns emerged from this analysis.

Comparable Data

No comparable data on blind and low vision populations are available for San Francisco, as this is the first local study of its kind that collects demographic information. Limited data are available related to gender, age, income, and educational attainment. However, our demographic research yielded some comparable data for race/ethnicity of blind and low vision populations that can be put side-by-side with characteristics of the survey sample, as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2
Race and Ethnicity Among Blind and Low Individuals

BLVPP Survey	**California[1]**	**United States[2]**
Caucasian/White: 54% African American/Black/African: 18% Latino/Hispanic: 7% Asian/Pacific Islander: 6% Biracial/Multiracial: 3% American Indian/Native American: 1% All Other: 5% Declined to State: 7%	White: 72% Black: 5% Hispanic: 13% Other Race: 10%	White: 80% Black: 18% All Other Races: 2% [Hispanic origin, any race: 8%]

[1] Estimated proportions of vision impaired and blind individuals aged 40 years and over in California, from www.nei.nih.gov/eyedatatables.asp Accessed 3/21/06.
[2] Prevalence by race among individuals in the US who were blind or visually impaired in 1992, from *Statistics and Sources for Professionals*, American Foundation for the Blind, www.afb.org Accessed 9/21/06.

V. Getting Around in San Francisco

This section presents findings from the survey questions related to getting around in San Francisco, via walking on public pathways, navigating inside public buildings, and using public transportation.

Walking in San Francisco

We asked respondents how often they get out and walk in San Francisco and what navigation methods they use when they are walking.

Most respondents get out and walk in San Francisco frequently, with forty-six percent (46.1%) walking "daily" and twenty-four percent (23.7%) walking "monthly." Just above ten percent (11.4%), or 26 individuals, reported that they "never" get out and walk in San Francisco.

Among those who walk in San Francisco, respondents reported using multiple methods to get around. Table 3 below summarizes these findings for those who walk in San Francisco, presenting the proportions of responses for each navigation method.

Table 3
Navigation Methods Used
by Respondents Who Walk in San Francisco
(n=202)

Method	Yes	No	Don't Know
Audible signals at crosswalks	52.5%	46.0%	1.5%
Other sounds at crosswalks	73.8%	24.3%	2.0%
Braille signs	11.4%	87.1%	1.5%
Raised bumps on street corners	35.1%	57.4%	7.4%
Tactile strips to follow on sidewalk	35.1%	56.9%	7.9%
Other tactile cues	62.9%	30.7%	6.4%
Global positioning via cell phone/pager	6.4%	91.1%	2.5%
Infrared signage with a receiver	1.5%	95.0%	3.5%
Long cane	65.8%	33.2%	1.0%
Guide dog	6.4%	93.6%	0.0%
Assistance from a sighted person	70.8%	28.7%	0.5%
Your available vision (n=126)	95.2%	3.2%	1.6%

* Because respondents could select multiple response options, percentages add up to greater than 100%.

Seventy-one percent (70.8%) use assistance from a sighted person to get around. Sixty-six percent (65.8%) use a long cane, (n=202).

Over half (52.5%) use audible signals at crosswalks.[3] Thirty-five percent (35.1%) use raised bumps on street corners, and thirty-five percent (35.1%) use tactile strips to follow on the sidewalk, (n=202).

[3] Those who are not San Francisco residents are more likely to report that they use audible signals in the City, leading us to speculate that this may be because they use them in other parts of the Bay Area. Sixty-three percent (62.8%) of respondents who do not live in San Francisco reported that they use audible signals at crosswalks when walking in San Francisco, as compared with half (49.7%) of respondents who live in San Francisco, and 52.5% of all respondents (χ^2, p =.031).

Eleven percent (11.4%) use Braille signs, six percent (6.4%) use a guide dog. Six percent (6.4%) use global positioning via a cell phone or pager, and two percent (1.5%) use infrared signage with a receiver to get around in San Francisco, (n=202).

Among those who are low vision and walk in San Francisco, almost all (95.2%) use their available vision to navigate, (n=126).

The greatest proportions of respondents use ambient sounds, tactile cues, and/or a long cane to get around. The smallest proportions use infrared signage with a receiver, global positioning with a cell phone/pager, and/or a guide dog.

We asked respondents who walk in San Francisco which of the following approaches they would find most helpful for walking in San Francisco. They were asked to select two from the list of methods, and Table 4 below shows the combined proportions of responses.

Table 4
Most Helpful Approaches
for Respondents Who Walk in San Francisco
(n=202)

Audible signals at crosswalks	61.4%
Raised bumps on street corners	33.2%
Tactile strips to follow on sidewalk	26.2%
Global positioning via cell phone/pager	12.4%
Infrared signage with a receiver	8.9%
Braille signs	4.0%
Other	14.9%
Don't know/No opinion	7.4%

* Because respondents could select multiple response options, percentages add up to greater than 100%.

Sixty-one percent (61.4%) of those respondents who walk in San Francisco would find audible signals at crosswalks most helpful.[4] One-third (33.2%) would find raised bumps on street corners most helpful. Over one-quarter (26.2%) would find tactile strips to follow on the sidewalk most helpful, (n=202).

Among the fifteen percent (14.9%) who would find "Other" approaches most helpful, some of the responses included: personal assistance from a friend or attendant; streetlights, traffic signals, and "regular signs," and the wheelchair curb and "ramps help." One person said "more time to cross street" would be helpful.

Intrusions and Obstructions

Among those who reported that they walk in San Francisco, we asked about how often they encounter intrusions into their path of travel; how often they encounter overhangs or obstructions that are not cane detectable; and how often they encounter bicyclists, skate boarders, or other vehicles on the sidewalk.

[4] There were not statistically significant differences between those who do and don't live in San Francisco, in their choice of audible pedestrian signals as the most helpful approach.

Forty-three percent (42.6%) of respondents who walk in San Francisco encounter intrusions into their path of travel "Always" or "Often," while twenty-seven percent (27.3%) "Rarely" or "Never" encounter intrusions, (n=202).

Thirty-three percent (32.7%) of respondents who walk in San Francisco encounter bicyclists, skate boarders, or other vehicles on the sidewalk "Always" or "Often," while thirty percent (30.7%) "Rarely" or "Never" do so, (n=202).

Twenty-one percent (20.8%) of respondents who walk in San Francisco encounter overhangs or obstructions that are not cane detectable "Always" or "Often," while forty-nine percent (48.5%) "Rarely" or "Never" encounter intrusions, (n=202).

Blind participants more frequently encounter intrusions into their path of travel. About sixty percent (60.6%) of Blind respondents "Always" or "Often" encounter intrusions into their path of travel, as compared with one-third of (32.8%) of Low Vision respondents. (χ^2, p =.028)

Way-finding Inside Public Buildings

Specifically related to navigating public buildings, we asked all respondents for their preferred methods for finding their way around inside government buildings. They were asked to select two from the list of methods, and Table 5 below shows the combined proportions of responses.

Table 5
Preferred Navigation Methods Inside Government Buildings
Among All Respondents
(n=228)

Personal assistance	78.9%
Informational technology	50.4%
Initial orientation and then independent use from memory	31.6%
Tactile cues, maps, or something you can feel	17.5%
Other	3.9%
Don't know/No opinion	3.1%

* Because respondents could select multiple response options, percentages add up to greater than 100%.

Most respondents (78.9%) prefer personal assistance (i.e., from staff or a help desk) to find their way around inside city government buildings, (n=228).

Half of the survey respondents (50.4%) prefer informational technology (i.e., such as Talking Signs™ with receivers located on site) for getting around inside public buildings, (n=228).

Just below one-third of respondents (31.6%) prefer to get around inside public buildings via independent use from memory following an initial orientation, (n=228).

Below one-fifth (17.5%) of respondents prefer tactile cues, maps, or something you can feel to get around inside government buildings, (n=228).

"Other" preferred methods specified by respondents include: large-print visible signs, "colored lines" leading to various departments, and a "combination of informational technology and tactile cues."

Emergency Information in Public Buildings

Among all respondents, seven percent (7.0%), or 16 people, reported that they have used a tactile evacuation sign. Of these 16 respondents, 9 people said that a tactile sign has made it easier for them to locate an emergency exit.

We asked all respondents what would be most useful to them in finding an emergency exit. They were asked to select two from the list of methods, and Table 6 below shows the combined proportions of responses.

Table 6
Most Useful Options for Finding Emergency Exits
Among All Respondents
(n=228)

Automatic audio announcements	71.1%
Staff assistance	68.9%
Directions in large print	32.9%
Directions in raised lettering	10.5%
Directions in Braille	3.5%
Other	3.5%
Don't know/No opinion	2.2%

* Because respondents could select multiple response options, percentages add up to greater than 100%.

Just above seventy percent of respondents (71.1%) would find automatic audio announcements in an emergency most useful for finding emergency exits, (n=228).

Just below seventy percent of respondents (68.9%) would find staff assistance in exiting the building safely most useful for finding emergency exits, (n=228).

One-third (32.9%) of respondents would find directions in large print most useful for finding emergency exits, while one-tenth (10.5%) would find directions in raised lettering most useful. Four percent (3.5%) would find directions in Braille most useful, (n=228).

"Other," specified options that respondents would find most useful for finding an emergency exit include: a "light flashing with beeping" and a "combination of Braille and assistance in exiting."

Blind and Low Vision participants have slightly different preferences for finding an emergency exit during an emergency. In finding an emergency exit, greater proportions of Blind respondents, as compared with Low Vision respondents, would find automatic audio announcements and directions in Braille useful in an emergency. Greater proportions of Low Vision respondents, as compared with Blind respondents, would find directions in large print useful. Very similar proportions would find useful staff assistance in exiting the building safely and directions in raised lettering, (χ^2, $p < .001$)

There were no statistically significant differences between Blind and Low Vision respondents in their use of tactile emergency signs.

Public Transportation

Fifty-four percent (53.9%) of respondents "Always" or "Often" use public transportation in San Francisco. Twenty-two percent (22.4%) of respondents "Never" use public transportation.

We asked those respondents who use public transportation in San Francisco what they would find most useful to them. They were asked to select two items from a list of choices, and Table 7 below shows the combined proportions of responses.

Table 7
Most Useful Choices
Among Respondents Who Use Public Transportation:
(n=177)

"Talking" buses or MUNI trains	72.9%
A driver who is helpful and freely gives information	53.1%
Bus stops or MUNI train stops that announce what bus is coming	22.6%
Bus stops or MUNI train stops that tell you what routes stop there	15.8%
Route and schedule information available by phone or Internet	11.3%
Other public transit workers who are helpful	9.6%
Other	7.9%
Don't know/no opinion	0.6%

* Because respondents could select multiple response options, percentages add up to greater than 100%.

The greatest proportion, seventy-three percent (72.9%), of respondents who use public transportation in San Francisco would find "'talking' buses or MUNI trains" most useful, (n=177).

Over half (53.1%) of respondents who use public transportation in San Francisco would find most useful "a driver who is helpful and freely gives information," (n=177).

Among respondents who use public transportation in San Francisco, twenty-three percent (22.6%) would find most useful "bus stops or MUNI trains stops that announce what bus is coming," while sixteen percent (15.8%) would find most useful "bus stops or MUNI train stops that tell you what routes stop there," (n=177).

Just above ten percent (11.3%) of respondents who use public transportation in San Francisco would find "route and schedule information available by phone or Internet most useful." Ten percent (9.6%) would find most useful "other public transit workers (i.e., other than drivers) who are helpful,"(n=177).

"Other" options for public transportation that respondents would find most useful include: "signs you can see with the talking buses," large print and Braille signs, and sighted assistance from a friend or companion. One person suggested, "audio by pressing a button, like Japanese buttons," while another suggested a "timer that tells what bus is coming." One respondent asked for a "way to find island bus stops in the street," while another simply said, "anything with a human voice" would be useful for riding public transportation.

General Way-Finding Information

We asked all respondents what is the best way for them to receive information when they are finding their way in San Francisco. They selected one option from the following: audio broadcasts or other

audible information, a device you carry with you, or a button you find and press. Based on their choice, they were asked to select among more specific options for each of these technologies. Table 8 below presents a summary of their responses.

Table 8
Best Ways for Respondents to Receive Information for Way-finding in San Francisco

Best Way to Receive Information for Finding Your Way in San Francisco	n=228	Specific Technologies	%
Audio broadcasts or other audible information	46.1%	Routine audio broadcasts (n=105)	48.6%
		A button you must press (n=105)	21.9%
		A motion detector that your presence triggers (n=105)	21.9%
		Other/Don't Know/No Opinion (n=105)	7.7%
A device you carry with you	21.1%	A global positioning system on a cell phone or pager you carry with you (n=48)	66.7%
		An infrared signal on a receiver you carry (n=48)	20.8%
		Other/Don't Know/No Opinion (n=48)	12.5%
A button you find and press	11.4%	A button with consistent placement (n=26)	57.7%
		A button you find via a locator sign (n=26)	26.9%
		Other/Don't Know/No Opinion (n=26)	15.4%
Other/Don't Know/No Opinion	21.4%		

Forty-six percent (46.1%) reported that it's best for them to receive information "through audio broadcasts or other audible information," (n=228). Of these respondents, almost half (48.6%) would prefer "routine audio broadcasts every few seconds," as compared to about one-fifth (21.9%) who would prefer "a button you must press" and one-fifth (21.9%) who would prefer "a motion detector that your presence triggers to start the information," (n=105).

Twenty-one percent (21.1%) reported that it's best for them to receive information "through a device you carry with you," (n=228). Of these respondents, two-thirds (66.7%) would prefer "a global positioning system on a cell phone or pager you carry with you," as compared to one-fifth (20.8%), or 10 individuals, who would prefer "an infrared signal on a receiver you carry," (n=48).

Eleven percent (11.4%) reported that it's best for them to receive information "through a button you find and press," (n=228). Of these respondents, fifty-eight percent (57.7%) (or 15 people) would prefer " a button with consistent placement," as compared with twenty-seven percent (26.9%), or 7 individuals, who would prefer "a button you find via a locator sign," (n=26).

VI. Information Access & Communication

This section includes findings about respondents' access to information and communication preferences and needs related to public services, benefits, and activities, including arts and recreation.

We asked all respondents how they currently receive information from San Francisco city departments. Table 9 below summarizes their responses.

Table 9
How Respondents Receive Information from City Departments About Public Services, Benefits, or Activities?
(n=228)

Talking to a city official on the phone	29.4%
Radio	28.9%
TV	27.2%
Large print by mail	19.7%
Internet or email	13.6%
Cassette tape	12.7%
Automated phone menu	9.6%
Braille	3.1%
Other	12.3%
None of the above	17.5%

* Because respondents could select multiple response options, percentages add up to greater than 100%.

About thirty percent of respondents (29.4%) receive information by talking to a city official on the phone, (n=228).

About thirty percent of respondents (28.9%) receive information about public services, benefits, or activities from the radio, (n=228).

Twenty-seven percent (27.2%) receive information about public services, benefits, or activities from TV, (n=228).

Twenty percent (19.7%) receive information about public services, benefits, or activities via large print by mail, (n=228).

"Other" ways that respondents receive information from San Francisco city departments include: "word of mouth" as from family and friends, and from community organizations, including the LightHouse, Blind and Visually Impaired of Marin, their senior center, and a social worker. Several people said they get information by regular (not large print) mail and via the newspaper. A number of respondents said that they "get no information from San Francisco city departments." Another said, "telephone calls and detective work," while yet another explained that they "go down to City Hall and ask them because they don't answer the phone."

We asked all respondents what they would find <u>most useful</u> for receiving information from San Francisco city departments. They were asked to select two items from a list of choices, and Table 10 below shows the combined proportions of responses.

Table 10
<u>Most Useful</u> Methods for Receiving Information from City Departments
(n=228)

Talking to a city official on the phone	43.0%
Large print by mail	34.6%
Internet or email	22.8%
Cassette tape	21.9%
TV	18.9%
Radio	18.4%
Automated phone menu	10.5%
Braille	5.3%
Other	5.3%
Don't know/No opinion	3.5%

* Because respondents could select multiple response options, percentages add up to greater than 100%.

Forty-three percent (43.0%) said they would find most useful "talking to a city official on the phone," (n=228). Male respondents are more likely (51.9%) than female respondents (35.0%) to prefer this option, (χ^2, p=.011).

Thirty-five percent (34.6%) said they would find most useful "large print by mail" for receiving information from city departments, (n=228).

Twenty-three percent (22.8%) said they would find most useful "Internet or email" for receiving information from city departments, (n=228). Male respondents, who also tend to be those respondents under age 40 years, are more likely than female respondents to prefer Internet and email communications about city services, (χ^2, p=.011).

Nineteen percent (18.9%) said they would find TV most useful, and eighteen percent (18.4%) said they would find Radio most useful.

Ten percent (10.5%) would find an "automated phone menu" most useful, and five percent (5.3%) would find Braille most useful.

"Other" ways of receiving information that respondents would find most useful include: community groups or organizations, "word of mouth," and either "mail that someone can read to me" or "mail that can be put into a scanner or reader."

Access to Arts & Recreation

Respondents were very evenly split in their assessment of the importance to them of experiencing public art exhibits in the city, if they were more accessible: 23.7% not at all important; 22.4% somewhat important; 23.7% important; 26.8% very important; 3.5% don't know/no opinion, (n=228).

We asked respondents for whom experiencing public art exhibits would be somewhat important, important, or very important about the best way for them to experience exhibits. Table 11 summarizes their answers.

Table 11
Best Way for Respondents
To Experience Public Art Exhibits

Best Way to Experience Public Art Exhibits	n=166	Specific Technologies	%
Through an audio description at the site where the art is located	51.2%	Wearing personal headphones to receive an audible description (n=85)	43.5%
		Pushing a button for an audible description (n=85)	43.5%
		Carrying a special receiver to pick up an infrared signal that then provides an audio description (n=85)	17.6%
Through a Braille, audio, or large print description available off-site, at the library or other convenient location	16.9%		
Through a miniature model at the site that you could touch and feel	12.0%		
Through a phone number to call for a description of the art	4.8%		
Other/Don't Know/No Opinion	15.0%		

Among respondents who reported that it was "somewhat important," "important," or "very important" to them, over half (51.2%) said they would prefer to experience public art exhibits "through an audio description at the site where the art is located," (n=166). Those who preferred an audio description specifically preferred "wearing personal headphones to receive an audible description" (43.5%), followed by "pushing a button for an audible description" (38.8%), (n=85). Eighteen percent (17.6%) (or 15 people) preferred "carrying a special receiver to pick up an infrared signal that then provides an audio description," (n=85).

Seventeen percent (16.9%) of respondents who reported that experiencing public art exhibits is "somewhat important," "important," or "very important" to them would prefer a "Braille, audio, or large print description available off-site, at the library or other convenient location," (n=166).

Twelve percent (12.0%) of respondents who reported that experiencing public art exhibits is "somewhat important," "important," or "very important" to them would prefer a "miniature model at the site that you could touch and feel," (n=166).

Five percent (4.8%) of respondents who reported that experiencing public art exhibits is "somewhat important," "important," or "very important" to them would prefer a "phone number to call for a description of the art," (n=166).

"Other" (7.8%) preferences for experiencing public art specified by respondents include: a docent guide for personal or group tours, a special day of tours for people who are disabled, and verbal descriptions by a friend or other art viewer.

VII. Disability Rights

This section reports findings related to questions about respondents' knowledge of disability rights.

Sixty-four percent of respondents (63.6%) report that they were not aware that they have the right to ask staff of city programs to provide information in an alternative format, (n=228).

In the last five years, over half (53.1%) of respondents have asked for assistance to access San Francisco city services, (n=228).

Among respondents who have not asked for assistance in the last five years, almost forty percent (38.8%) said they "did not need assistance," while thirty percent (30.1%) did not ask for help because they "did not know you could," (n=103). Twelve percent of respondents who did not ask for assistance said this was because they "felt uncomfortable asking," (n=103).

"Other" reasons respondents did not ask for assistance include: "not sure where to locate help," "independent living," or they receive sighted assistance from a family member or social worker.

Two-thirds (66.2%) of respondents reported that they did not know they "could call the Mayor's Office on Disabilities to complain if your rights are not being met," (n=228).

General Accessibility Findings

- 31.6% of respondents "Always" or "Often" have encountered physical obstacles to getting around in San Francisco, (n=228).
- 30.3% of respondents "Always" or "Often" have encountered communication access barriers in San Francisco, (n=228).
- 15.3% of respondents "Always" or "Often" have encountered lack of sensitivity or responsiveness by SF City workers.
- Blind respondents are even more likely than low vision respondents to report frequently encountering physical obstacles and communication barriers: 27.1% of Blind respondents "Always" encounter physical obstacles, as compared with 6.7% of Low Vision respondents, (χ^2, p =.003); 37.7% of Blind respondents "Always" or "Often" encounter communication barriers, as compared with 25.1% of Low Vision Respondents, (χ^2, p =.037).

Respondents over age 60 years and female respondents are less likely to have asked for assistance to access SF city services, and older respondents are less likely to be aware that they can call the MOD if their rights are not being met. Know Your Rights training may be even more important for older participants.

- 45.0% of respondents over 60 have asked for assistance to access San Francisco city services in the past five years, as compared with 63.0% of respondents under 60 (and 53% of all respondents), (χ^2, p =.023). Female respondents are also less likely to have asked for assistance (43.3%), as compared with male respondents (63.9%), (χ^2, p =.007).
- Respondents who are ages 30-49 years are most likely to have asked for assistance, while those who are 80 years and above are least likely, (χ^2, p =.021).

- 72.5% of respondents over age 60 years are not aware that they could call the Mayor's Office on Disabilities "if your rights are not being met," as compared with 59.8% of respondents under age 60 years (and 66% of all respondents) (χ^2, p =.048).

Among all respondents, almost twenty percent (19.3%) reported that they have received "inadequate or inappropriate" assistance from a San Francisco city employee. Specific departments or locations cited by these respondents include:

- BART
- City College
- City Hall (x5)
- Dept on Aging, Planning for Elders
- EDD
- Health and Human Services
- Housing Department for Eviction
- Library
- Mayor's Office on Disability
- MUNI and MUNI Drivers (x20)
- Paratransit
- Public Health (x3)
- Public Housing
- Rent board
- SF General Hospital
- Social Security
- Teacher Dept of Rehabilitation

VIII. Prioritizing Improved Accessibility of City Services

This section presents information about respondents' prioritization of improving accessibility in six broad areas of city services.

We asked respondents to rank the importance of improving accessibility for people who are blind or low vision in each of six areas of San Francisco city services on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 = not at all important and 7 = extremely important.

The scores of all six areas tended toward the high end of the importance scale. However, there is some differentiation in the mean rankings as shown in Table 12 below:

Table 12
Importance of Improving Accessibility
for People Who are Blind or Low Vision
in Six Areas of City Services

Area of City Services	Mean score (scale of 1 to 7)	n
Transportation, travel, and pathways	6.28	219
Public safety and emergency services	6.12	206
Public health and social services	5.90	200
Housing	5.88	206
Arts and recreation	5.79	210
Administrative services	5.72	213

City services in area of Transportation, Travel, and Pathways received a ranking of 6.28, with a highest possible score of seven equal to the greatest importance of improving accessibility for people who are blind or low vision in this area.

We also asked all respondents which one of these six areas would be their top priority for the City of San Francisco to improve and increase access for people who are blind or low vision. The proportions of respondents who selected each area are presented in Table 13 below.

Table 13
Top Priority Area To Improve and Increase Access
(n=228)

Transportation, travel, and pathways	41.7%
Public health and social services	18.0%
Housing	12.3%
Public safety and emergency services	11.0%
Arts and recreation	6.6%
Administrative services	4.4%
Other/No Opinion/Decline to State	6.1%

The greatest proportion, forty-two percent of respondents (41.7%) selected "public transportation, travel, and pathways" as their top priority, (n=228).

Eighteen percent (18.0%) selected "public health and social services" as their top priority, (n=228).

Twelve percent (12.3%) selected "housing" as their top priority, (n=228).

Eleven percent (11.0%) selected "public safety and emergency services" as their top priority, (n=228).

Seven percent (6.6%) selected "arts and recreation" as their top priority, (n=228).

Four percent (4.4%) selected "administrative services" as their top priority, (n=228).

We asked participants to select the primary reason they chose this priority area. As summarized in Table 14 below, their responses were split fairly evenly.

Table 14
Reasons for Selecting Top Priority Area
(n=228)

You use services in this area most frequently	28.1%
Services in this area impact the greatest number of people who are blind or low vision	27.2%
You or someone you know has personally encountered barriers in this area	25.0%
Other	5.7%
No opinion/Decline to state	14.0%

"Other" reasons include: reluctance to choose one reason or "all of the above," "I care about public health and safety," "I want to arrive at my destination safely" and other reasons related to safety in travel and housing, and lastly, "you have to go to these people to get anything done."

The reasons for choosing a priority area are significantly related to the areas selected:

Those who selected Public Transportation, Travel, and Pathways as their top priority area for the City to improve and increase access for people who are blind or low vision were most likely choose this priority because they "use services in this area most frequently," (χ^2, $p \leq .001$).

Those who selected Public Safety, Public Health and Social Services, or Housing as their top priority area were most likely to choose this priority because "services in this area impact the greatest number of people who are blind or low vision," (χ^2, $p \leq .001$).

Those who selected Arts and Recreation as their top priority area were most likely to do so either because they "use areas in this services most frequently" or "you or someone you know has personally encountered barriers in this area," (χ^2, $p \leq .001$).

Those who selected Administrative Services as their top priority area were most likely to choose this area because "you or someone you know has personally encountered barriers in this area," (χ^2, $p \leq .001$).

APPENDIX G

Focus Groups Summary Report

Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project (BLVPP)
Brief Report on Focus Groups
December 2006

In November 2006, the Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project (BLVPP) held two large community meetings, sponsored by the LightHouse for the Blind and the Mayor's Office on Disability (MOD) in order to bring together people who are blind and low vision and who live in, work in, or frequently visit San Francisco. The meetings followed the recent BLVPP survey of community priorities for improving the accessibility of San Francisco city services for people who are blind and low vision. By engaging community members in small group discussions at the meetings, we sought to gather qualitative data that would add context and depth to the survey findings. We designed a discussion protocol that would gather people's opinions, experiences, and stories.

The meetings also offered an opportunity for the Mayor's Office on Disability to give "Know Your Rights" training to community members. The MOD sought to give information about disability rights and to find out how to improve communication and outreach. The importance of this aspect of the meetings became even more apparent when survey findings showed that almost two-thirds of survey respondents were not aware that they have the right to ask the staff of city programs to provide information in an alternative format. Two-thirds of respondents also reported that they did not know they "could call the Mayor's Office on Disability to complain if your rights are not being met."

A total of 54 blind and low vision individuals attended the Wednesday, November 15 meeting at San Francisco City Hall and the Saturday, November 18 meeting at the LightHouse for the Blind, which included chapter

representatives from California Council for the Blind (CCB) and National Federation for the Blind (NFB). Both meetings were attended by a diversity of participants, representing a cross-section of San Francisco communities. We observed that about half of participants are male and half are female, while about sixty percent are white and forty percent are people of color. Ages were observed to range from 30's to 70's. The groups included participants with various degrees and recentness of vision loss: people who are blind and low vision, some participants who have had vision loss since birth and others who have recently lost vision, some who reported that their vision has improved since first experiencing vision loss.

After an initial welcome in plenary session, we broke up into small focus group discussions, which followed a prepared protocol of questions. Each discussion group was staffed by: a facilitator, a note taker, and a LightHouse staff person, who was present to assist participants as needed. After the group discussions, we reconvened for the MOD's Know Your Rights training. In appreciation for their attendance, each participant received a gift card.

This report summarizes the recommendations gathered from focus group participants via content analysis of the focus group notes. The recommendations are summarized according to the topics addressed in the discussion protocol, which is attached below. The final report on the BLVPP also will include direct quotations from participants, illustrating these findings.

Compilation of Recommendations from the Focus Groups

Voting:

- Provide advance training for voters who are blind and low vision on how to use accessible voting machines
- Provide training for polling staff on how to help people with a disability and how to use and fix the accessible machines, perhaps offering financial incentives such as increased pay
- Provide more personal assistance at the polling stations while ensuring confidentiality and security of ballot responses
- Increase notification of the locations of voting, polls, machines, including increasing bright and large signage to identify the polling places
- Increase pre-voting information via an information hotline and materials on tape, including condensed versions, and via more accessible voter information websites
- Participants particularly mentioned their appreciation for the cassette-taped voters' guide
- Offer personal assistance at City Hall for those coming in with absentee ballots
- Provide large print ballots or embossed-print ballot including absentee ballots
- Offer early voting (at polls) for people who are blind and low vision
- Prepare for people with multiple sensory disabilities by providing amplification at polling places
- Increase the number and availability of accessible voting machines
- Provide Paratransit coverage or other transportation assistance to transport people to and from their polling places
- Call people who are older and blind to offer them assistance getting to the polls
- Many participants said that they do not need assistance getting to the polls
- Some participants reported that they like the new machines
- Many respondents said that they vote absentee
- Several respondents found San Francisco's rank choice voting confusion

Transportation and Travel:

- Via informal straw polls, focus group participants were split in their agreement with survey findings that transportation was the top priority area for improving access. On 11/15, most participants agreed, but on 11/18 about half of the participants agreed.

- Rather than developing new technologies, participants emphasized that enforcement and improvement of existing technologies (and policies), especially audible technologies to announce destinations and stops, on MUNI buses would make the biggest difference in accessibility of public transportation
    - Drivers should not turn off automatic announcements and/or should not refuse to announce the stops themselves
    - Drivers should call out stops more consistently and MUNI and BART; every stop should be announced
    - Sync up the technology so announcements are correct: Automatic announcements should be coordinated with actual stops, so that people will not exit early or late
    - Stop announcements should be made well in advance to give all people time to prepare to exit
- Add recordings and/or a button at the bus stops that announce which bus is arriving, at what time it's scheduled to arrive, and where it is going. Each bus should have a recording that gives this information when the doors open
- Increase the volume of announcements on MUNI and BART because they are hard to hear and need to be louder and clearer, speakers need repair and/or relocation
- Automate the BART system announcements to include not only train destination but current location; the intercom system is difficult to hear
- Increase size and reflectivity of signage on MUNI and BART and at SFO
- Explore new, directional sound technology ("broadband") to guide people to exits
- Provide more information and options to streamline travel using public transit
    - Publicize where BART talking ticket machines are located
    - Publicize availability and locations to buy reduced-fare tickets, including online. Include an announcement with this information when you are on hold on the phones for BART and AC transit
    - Provide one transit card that would work for all systems
- Individual drivers can make a big difference in the travel experience
- Make it easier to communicate with/talk to MUNI drivers, who usually sit behind glass with the door closed
- Proactive requests and communication of blind and low vision people are necessary
- Identify and use both up and down escalators at MUNI and BART exits on Market Street

- Put bumps where the underground MUNI trains will stop and doors will open (like BART)
- Increase drivers' awareness of where they are letting passengers on and off the buses, so that people who are blind and low vision don't run into an obstacle as soon as they get of the bus
- Provide training for taxi drivers about picking up and dropping off people who are blind and low vision
    - Both taxis and buses will pass by someone who is blind or low vision
    - Taxi drivers need to wait longer for pick-ups
    - Provide a large "taxi" sign for people who are blind and low vision to hold up to catch taxis.
- Add audible sounds to help people navigate steps on and off MUNI, to help count steps and prevent falls
- Anticipate protocols for assisting people who are blind and low vision when transit fails
- Participants had much discussion about how other riders won't move out of the front seats, especially if the rider doesn't "look" blind. Most thought it was the drivers' responsibility to tell other passengers to move, and that they should receive training on how to do this, while some thought public education was a solution. Still others thought it was primarily their own responsibility to say something. One of the groups, in particular, discussed the importance of people with disabilities being "proactive" to get their needs meet and to ask for help when needed.

Intrusions and Obstacles:

We asked participants what kind of intrusions and obstacles they encounter when walking San Francisco, and they generated a substantial list:

- People on crowded streets, sitting on steps going down into the BART station, standing in curb cuts
- Cars or motorcycles parked on the sidewalk or in driveways, requiring navigation out into the street to get around them
- Tables and chairs on the sidewalks outside of restaurants
- Construction: scaffolding [makes it necessary to walk in the street], construction barriers and whether sidewalks should be blocked off or marked off more completely; construction sites leaving open uncovered holes
- Homeless people change the landscape
- Dogs leashed to poles and parking meters
- A-frame sandwich signboards on the sidewalks

- Sidewalks in poor condition, uneven pavement, potholes, dips in the street; holes in the sidewalks, or broken sidewalks, irregular sidewalks
- Bicyclists on the sidewalk
- Skateboarders
- Sidewalk trees: trees on the sidewalk that are low-hanging; metal cages around trees that curl at the top and poke you at head level need rubber bumpers; holes around trees require a tall enough barrier that you won't run into, fall over, or fall into the trees
- Garbage [on the sidewalks]
- Sunset Scavenger leave garbage cans all over the place and not at the curb
- Steps that stick out [into the path of travel: Victorian steps]
- Curb cuts are great but inconsistent [not yet present everywhere]
- Pedestrian walkways are not maintained trash-free and landscaped
- Emergency fireboxes at street corners
- Obstacles at bus stops where the bus door opens, or where MUNI train doors open
- Lights are too short at big and busy intersections; need more time to get across large streets
- Having to get out of a MUNI train car in the middle of the street with traffic
- Danger of "right on red" and pedestrian fatalities

<u>Recommendations</u>

- Increase responsiveness of Public Works Dept about obstacles when they are called
- Enforce rules against parking on sidewalks and cite those who do
- Educate city workers, including construction workers, about how to assist blind people with navigation [so they don't just come up and grab someone]
- Make it easier to locate escalators and elevators on Market Street for MUNI and BART
- Carve street names into the cement on corners or in curb cuts consistently, so it can be "read" with a cane
- Paint emergency fireboxes at street corners yellow or white to be seen at night
- Put grooves on stairs [of public buildings and on transit] to indicate a step for cane users
- Educate public about what the white cane means
- Educate people who are blind and low vision about the star shape in an elevator (lobby level)

- Maintain accessible features in public walkways by clearing garbage and landscaping
- Install audible signals on street corners to announce the intersection and state of the light
- Provide longer street lights, with more time for crossing wide streets
- Paint escalator stairs with yellow strips/higher contrast paint and marking
- Paint yellow lines or provide a guide strip for street crossing
- Use orange cones more consistently to mark escalator repair in BART
- Enforce rules to keep people off public stairs and walkways
- Participants appreciated curb cuts, especially painted yellow and with raised bumps, and the areas that line up with doors on BART
- Some participants brought their own documentation of obstacles and barriers in their areas (a drawing of obstacles in a public walkway and a CD with photo documentation)

Audible Technology:

Of the four groups that were "polled" about a preference for audible technology suggested by the survey findings, almost all participants agreed that this is true for them.

<u>Drawbacks of Audible Technology</u>

- Expensive to put everywhere
- Multiple sensory disabilities (including hearing loss) need more than audible
- For people who speak languages other than English, it's hard to find a universal sound or code
- It can be difficult to know which direction and sound are connected unless the signal announces street names or there is a consistent sound/cue used by all signals
- Sounds can be out of sync with street lights

<u>Recommendations</u>

- Use audible technologies for: crossing street corners, emergency exit instructions, in buildings, for announcements by MUNI bus drivers
- There was a lot of discussion among participants about which sounds are preferred. Some people liked the chirping bird sounds (used in the East Bay), while others found them "confusing" and "annoying." Some suggested changing the speed of the beep to indicate the changing color of

the streetlights. Others liked “wait, wait, wait” for red lights and “go, go, go” for green lights, or “beep beep” when light is red and “gu gu gu” when light is green.

- Several participants preferred audible signals that announce the name of the street
- Several participants liked the tactile buttons that add a vibration to the beep
- Increase signal time allowed to cross large streets (Van Ness – East to West, Mission, Lombard)
- Place signals at: 4th and King, 19th and Holloway, Cesar Chavez and Mission
- Place audible signals at key intersections with complex traffic patterns
- Place signals a “T-intersections” without four-way traffic (Embarcadero, Fisherman’s Warf, Pier 39, Ferry Building, Baseball stadium)
- “Just do it! The technology is here!”

Talking Signs™

Five groups discussed Talking Signs™. In general, participants’ comments were not favorable. Several people said they weren’t aware of this technology. Those who have used Talking Signs™ felt that the signals were not always clear or that the signs interfere with each other indoors (e.g., inside the Main Library) and that they could be hard to hear outside. Others said they do not want to obtain and carry a special receiver. They would prefer to use cell phones/GPS for location identification. One person emphasized that the technology isn’t ubiquitous enough to make it worthwhile to do training or to carry another device. One person said the best application could be in a museum tour or indoor mall, where you could pick up and return a receiver on site.

Public Assistance:

Of the six groups who discussed survey respondents’ suggested preference for staff assistance inside public buildings, almost all agreed that they would prefer this as well, although there was some individual variation in how they would like to be offered the assistance and how independent they prefer to be in getting around.

Recommendations

- Provide training for all city employees, especially those who work directly with the public including security guards and transit drivers, about how to identify, greet, and assist people who are blind and low vision

    - Use disabled trainers; someone with a disability should do the training
    - Improve security guards' protocols at City Hall
    - Provide sensitivity training for MUNI employees
    - Provide training for security checkpoint staff at the airport, education about the cane
    - Educate people about guide dog policies
- Have a procedure already in place for how to get people from one place to another in a public building
- Make it possible to make an appointment for a security person or other sighted guide to meet you at a public building
- Increase large-print, high contrast, and Braille signage in public buildings
- Combine technology and personal assistance to make navigation easier
- Provide personal assistance in an emergency, including developing a pre-arranged emergency evacuation plan or buddy system

Alternative Communication Formats:

<u>Preferences for Receiving Emergency Information</u>

- Cassette or audio tape (x6)
- Electronic (email, disk, or CD) (x6)
- Telephone call (x4)
- TV and radio announcements (x4)
- Telephone or referral number you can call for emergency information (x2)
- "I'd like someone to knock on the door."
- Websites (connected to PSAs on TV or radio)
- Braille
- Brochures
- Include a city section in the newspaper regularly, which could be put on tape
- Bulk mailing should list all available formats and how to call for information in these formats

<u>What Else Should the City Do?</u>

- Use multiple methods to get out emergency information, especially because some don't use computers
- Keep a data bank of people who are blind and low vision for special/emergency notification
- Distinguish between less urgent mail and important announcements

- Use and publicize the San Francisco public access channel
- Read aloud all information shown on TV, including “banners” along the bottom of the screen
- Use text messaging [to cell phones] and provide software to read it [aloud]

Why Aren’t People Using Braille for Public Navigation and Information?

- Technological options (tapes, CDs, talking computers) have made Braille obsolete
- People have become more audio-focused than tactile
- Braille is not being taught to blind kids in public schools
- Braille is difficult to learn
- Older adults don’t want to learn a new language, or report it would be hard for them
- People are told that Braille is outdated
- Technology to produce Braille is too expensive
- Braille documents take too long to produce, especially for emergency information
- We don’t want to exclude those who can’t read Braille
- Braille signs are difficult to find, even if you can read Braille
- Given the choice between big print or Braille, big print is better
- Some prefer Braille for personal information (e.g., bank statement) because it’s private
- Some prefer Braille because it’s reliable “when the batteries go dead”
- It would be good to support each other in learning and using Braille

If Staff at City Hall Refuses Assistance:

What would you do?

- Ask for or talk to a supervisor (x13)
- Take a form home to fill it out, or fill it out online (x8)
- Make an appointment to fill out forms (x3)
- Insist on help (x2)
- Ask for an extension
- Recommend a staff training
- Participants said they would use various strategies, depending on the urgency of completing the form/transaction, the length and complexity of the form, and the reason for refusal of help

What should the City do?

- Train supervisors and other employees
- Make the forms more accessible, excluding graphics and avoiding PDF/HTML format
- “Just in simple terms: training employees to help, period. Exclamation mark!”

Mayor of San Francisco for a Day:

- Provide public education (x6): Hold experiential trainings or street fairs for disability awareness, including information for kids and about the meaning of the white cane
- Address living expenses/cost of living (x5): provide living expenses and rent assistance; cable vision and low cost cell phones for people; resources to feed people; affordable housing; more funding for housing for low income people and seniors
- Provide training for all public employees, city and county workers about people who are blind and low vision, the white cane; education and enforcement with MUNI drivers (x4)
- Install audible signals on street corners immediately (x4)
- Improve taxis (x3): Revamp the taxi system to pick up guide dogs and to come on time or quickly; taxi accountability for showing up and to give priority to people who are blind and low vision hailing on the street; more taxis, a whole fleet; restore SF Paratransit taxi scrips
- Increase accessible information about San Francisco events (x2)
- Monitor the city by video camera to see if anyone needs assistance
- Use both up and down escalators on MUNI and BART
- Improve transportation services by creating a ‘jitney’ system
- Give major tickets to vehicles that jeopardize personal safety
- Place railings on MUNI underground and BART to keep people from falling into the tracks
- Keep public offices open during advertised hours
- Reach out to disabled people, especially those who are “inbound” [homebound]
- Put street numbers in a consistent location and height and in larger numbers
- Use universalized talking sign technology inside every public building and to identify street addresses and content
- Increase escorted options for travel

- Increase enforcement to aid travel, including more beat cops (e.g., to calm traffic)
- Increase length of traffic signals on large streets
- Create a phone hotline with accessible information [about city services]
- Assess availability of city jobs for people with disabilities and strengthen the Rule 15 hiring exemptions

Other Recommendations:

- Encourage an auditory aspect for public art, e.g., art and sculpture that makes sounds
- Use private docents for art and culture experiences
- Certify and train in-home support service workers to work with blind and low vision people
- Address needs of people who are blind and low vision in assisted living residences
- Mark the stairs in housing authority buildings with color contrast stripes on stairs (past requests to do this were unheeded)
- Provide emergency preparedness for people who are blind and low vision
- Improve access to and announcements at sporting events
- Prioritize audible pedestrian signals, especially at wide streets, and pair them with a way-finding strip from one curb to the other
- Place way-finding strips leading into BART stations
- Create an ombudsperson or liaison for registering complaints and taking action
- Provide public education about the white cane
- Review the accessibility of basic city information, improve the navigability of city websites
- Provide training for the police about how to respond to injuries of blind pedestrians
- Provide materials in alternative formats for jury duty
- Increase awareness of disability rights information

Disability Rights and Access Information

Questions about disability rights emerged both in the small discussions and during the Know Your Rights trainings. These point out areas of confusion among participants regarding their rights related to policies and procedures and

may be used to guide action or education by the LightHouse and MOD. These include the following questions from participants:

1. Is it a law that there should be one accessible machine in every voting place? What happens if there are multiple people who need to use it?
2. Is it mandatory for a bus driver to make sure that a blind person has a seat?
3. Is it asking too much that the MUNI drivers announce every stop?
4. Does the MUNI system direct drivers to lower the coach for someone with a [white] cane?
5. Where are Talking Signs™ and audible pedestrian signals located in San Francisco?
6. Helping fill out forms: Is it something that city employees are not allowed to do? Is it prohibited because of confidentiality or privacy law?
7. How is the city going to communicate with me during a major disaster?
8. Is it okay for the Department of Elections to tell me to print the voters' guide and get someone to read it to me, when I call and ask them for a taped version?
9. How can I identify or find a person who is available to provide assistance [in a city building]?
10. Does San Francisco have a public TV channel?
11. Where are the accessible BART ticket machines?
12. Where can I find reduced-fare transit cards?
13. Where can I learn how to read Braille?

APPENDIX H

Focus Groups Supplemental Report

LightHouse for the Blind
Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project
Focus Groups Supplemental Report
February 2007

This document summarizes information gathered via three additional focus groups held in February 2007, as part of the Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project. The focus groups were designed to add the input of people who are deaf-blind, people whose primary language is Spanish, and young people who are blind and low vision.

Deaf-Blind Focus Group

There were five deaf-blind participants in this group, plus one LightHouse staff person and three interpreters. Most of the recommendations from this group echoed those of previous focus groups. Due the time required for interpretation, this group covered three questions on the protocol, those related to: voting access, transportation access and street navigation, and being Mayor for a Day (general recommendations).

Related to transportation, one person said, “I think it’s a big priority because I use it every day; other services such as going to the doctor or social services agencies, I use once in a while. That’s why transportation arena is a priority for me. I use it everyday and rely on it to maintain my independence.” There were a couple of very specific suggestions that came out of the discussion that are interesting:

Participants suggested providing transit communication cards for deaf-blind riders to hold up at stops (with the bus number printed on them) and/or for a passenger to give the transit driver to request a stop. Apparently this system is in use in Seattle. The main drawback seemed to be that drivers may disregard the signs or may forget that they have been given a communication card. Another person pointed out that this is a small fix for a bigger problem with the transit system, saying, “The people in authority aren’t here, and we need someone with teeth who can make things happen.”

The colors and size of signage and the notification system in BART present a problem. This group discussed specific difficulties seeing red letters and flashing signs. They recommended high contrast black and white, large print, and

constant illumination. As one person explained, “BART stations in SF in the past used to be lit. The words were printed in white and the letters were easier to read, but not the print has been changed to red, which is a bad color for a low-vision person to see. My top complaint is that you don’t know where you are because of poor signage.” Another added, “We need constant illumination rather than lights flashing. The only way I know I’m at civic Center is because I can see that there are two words.” A third person concluded, “I wish we had a better notification system. On BART, I might fall asleep on the train, and when I wake up, I may not know what station I’m in. I wish there were a light on the signs or larger signs, which would make it easier to know where I am. Otherwise I get to work late or miss meeting a friend on time.”

For navigating city streets, this group particularly appreciated tactile guide systems such as the one on Tokyo city streets and transport stations and the yellow bumpy curb cuts on San Francisco corners: “The yellow raised bumps on the sidewalk—I’d like to see more that.” One person suggested, “If we provided a different tactile system, perhaps something similar to the blue handicapped sign—something on the ground to give a place for people with disabilities to stand so they knew where they were in the bus/train station.” Participants also praised the vibrating audible signals to get across the street, agreeing that “more of these would be great.”

For voting: Receiving materials ahead of time, receiving advance training or a workshop on how to vote, condensed materials in large print, having a contact person who is familiar with relay (to request accessible materials), and receiving personal assistance would be appreciated. Three participants mentioned that they usually vote absentee.

Spanish-Language Focus Group

There were four Spanish-speaking participants in this group, plus one LightHouse staff person and one interpreter. This focus group covered all questions on the discussion protocol. Most of the recommendations in this group echoed those from previous focus groups, especially related to the accessibility of public transit (MUNI buses in particular).

As reported in other groups, participants said, “BART is a problem—can’t see lettering for the stops; when they make announcements you can’t hear what they’re saying.” And, “Some buses have the capacity to say what the numbers of

the bus are in San Francisco, but a lot of the chauffeurs don't turn them on. The chauffeurs are supposed to announce the most important stops, but they don't."

For getting around the city, participants in this group appreciated the curb cuts. "There's a little area where you walk down at each corner, and those are very helpful." They mentioned obstacles such as cars on the sidewalk, trees with low limbs, and angled streets. "Those streets at an angle: Put some signs there so drivers can see, and put in some audio technology." All four prefer sound to help them get around.

English language audio or signage does not particularly add to navigation barriers for these Spanish-speaking participants. Participants were not familiar with Talking Signs™ One person said that with APS it would be helpful to hear "Stop" and "Go" in Spanish. They emphasized, "the clarity is especially critical." One person reported that it's harder to get assistance with large print or reading a form (accommodation for vision impairment) than it is to get a form in Spanish.

Participants prefer staff assistance, and they are seeking ways to request assistance, for example to obtain large print forms. They suggested a special ID card for people with disabilities, which they could hand to city workers to ask for assistance. None of these participants knew about the ADA.

Youth Focus Group

Ten young people attended this discussion group. Public transportation clearly was their greatest area of concern, as they launched into this topic right away without prompting. When asked what concerns might be of greater interest to young people who are blind and low vision, as compared with older adults, participants highlighted greater importance of mobility issues and greater comfort with technology and electronic access.

Many of their concerns regarding transportation echoed those reported in other groups, regarding problems with automated announcements, driver behavior and the need for driver training. For example, "Give drivers' anger management classes; when I remind them [that they need to announce stops] they give me attitude and get angry, and then they won't stop!" And "Even on some automated buses, the timing it off. Like on the 47, sometimes it will announce the street after we've passed it already. The timing meant I didn't ever really know what stop I was at." All of the participants in this group use MUNI and BART extensively to

get around the City. They also had a few specific suggestions not heard in other groups. For example, adding a beep at the door of underground trains to help with location, and placing the Brailled driver identification number lower and on both sides of the train/bus.

Audible technologies, particularly at street corners, were extremely popular in this group. They preferred audible signals that provide location and direction via street names, rather than beeping or chirping. They also recommended increased volume and audible count-downs at street corners. Fewer than half of the group had heard of Talking Signs™ — "It would have been nice if I'd known it existed. I'll go Google it." — and their reaction was neutral when this technology was described.

The group was split on the usefulness of tactile bumps at street corners (although they agreed tactile bumps are indispensable in BART and MUNI train stations). Rather, they would prefer tactile or textured crosswalks, or guides to crosswalks, that would help them stay aligned, particularly at streets that are not at right angles. Most reported that they usually can tell when they are at corner (tho there was some disagreement about this), but that they have a more difficult time crossing safely in the correct direction. Other issues related to navigating city streets had to do with obstacles such as garbage, dog feces, and people loitering on public steps or walkways.

Consensus seemed to favor signals at corners that announce location, direction, and count down; paired with a vibrating button; and also paired with tactile guides to the crosswalk lines.

Other topics we covered included assistance from the public and city workers, emergency situations, and voting. Participants touched on the need for public education as well as training in how to provide help to someone who is blind or low vision. As one person put it, "Don't tell me [to go] 'over there,' because I don't know where you mean." The clearest agreement seemed to be that personal assistance in an emergency would be more reliable than an audible warning or directions. As another person said, "people being educated on how to deal with a blind person is more important than the technology; I'd rather they know how to help me than to wait for the technology."

Discussion of voting seemed to elicit more questions than answers. For example, participants asked whether accessible voting machines are available throughout

San Francisco, and they didn't know what their rights were regarding election materials.

All participants were familiar with the Americans with Disabilities Act and seemed actively interested in tools and information to help them raise complaints if needed.

APPENDIX I

Instruments

- Leadership Poll Protocol
- Survey Instrument
- Focus Group Protocol
- Focus Group Protocol – Deaf-Blind
- Focus Group Protocol – Spanish
- Focus Group Protocol – Youth

Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project
Leadership Meeting Process Agenda & Protocol
The LightHouse BankAmerica Conference Room (2nd Floor)

Overview & Introduction

My name is Rachel Lanzerotti, and I am an independent consultant doing research and evaluation with nonprofits in the Bay Area. I will be leading the conversation today, and I want to thank you for your participation. I'll start by giving you some context, via a brief description of the project, and then we'll dive into a structured discussion.

First, the introduction: The LightHouse is partnering with San Francisco's Mayor's Office on Disability (MOD) to gather opinions from community members who are blind and low vision on priorities for city services. Whether it is the voting process, public transportation or the accessibility of public art exhibitions, we want to measure what is most important. Essentially, you will be helping decide what is important.

There is a range of responses that the City can take to meet its technical requirements under the law, and we're trying to really look at what will work best for the most people. With the assumption that compliance with the law is the baseline, where will investments of time and energy have the biggest payoff? Where can the City do a better job on topics most important to communities of people who are blind and visually impaired? What should the City pay attention to first? *[For example, for an art exhibit, the law would say if you have the name of a painting, the artist, and a brief description in Braille you are technically in compliance. Whereas, it may be that people would actually prefer audio-description that they can listen to at their leisure, or that the City reduce investing in visual-only arts and step up investment in art that is tactile.]*

Over the next twelve months, the LightHouse is contracting with me to do several meetings with leaders, a telephone survey and community meetings with focus groups. All this is designed to collect community input on how the City should best prioritize the services provided to blind and visually impaired people.

The first step in designing this community research is to talk with you, leaders in the community. The purpose of this conversation is to ask about your experiences with San Francisco city services. We also have some specific questions. We want to hear your thoughts on how best to approach the broader community. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Groundrules

- This group will run about 2 hours, and we'll have a break at some point. But feel free to take breaks on your own as needed.
- First, there are no right or wrong answers. Please respect what others have to say, even when their opinion is different from yours
- Please speak one at a time—this will help the note taker capture everyone's thoughts and opinions. If the note taker gets behind or needs clarification, she'll speak up or signal me.
- If you agree with what someone says, please speak up rather than nodding your head or gesturing in some way.

Does anyone have other ground rules they would like to propose?

- I would like to use a tape recorder to capture today's conversation, in order to back up our notes in case there's anything we miss. Is everyone OK with us using the tape recorder? Is there anyone who would prefer not to be recorded?

Do you have any other questions?

Participant Introductions

Let's start by introducing ourselves.

- *Go around to record the name and primary affiliation of each participant – plus an icebreaker like: how did you travel here today?*

We're going to begin our conversation with a discussion of some specific issues. From there, we'll use the last part of the meeting to talk more generally about your priorities. The first specific issue we want to discuss is related to way-finding, public paths, and travel.

<u>Public paths and travel: What is the preferred mode of way-finding in the BLV community?</u>

1. San Francisco has promoted Talking Signs™ in the past, so this is a top issue. We're looking for guidance on whether the City should continue on that path.
    a. How many of you have used Talking Signs™? *[show of hands]*
    b. Have you used other audible way-finding systems? If so, which ones?
    c. Would you be willing to carry with you a specific technology in order to get infrared signals versus audible signals? (Either as a separate technology such as Talking Signs™ or GPS, or as technology integrated into your cell phone/sidekick)

2. In your opinion, should the City invest in one major way-finding technology at this time? (e.g., audible bus stops, talking trail signs)
    a. Are there any particular technologies that you would or would not support?
    b. What makes a technology or accommodation most useful and useable for you (e.g., self-explanatory, universal design, etc.)?

3. What questions should we ask of the broader communities of people who are blind and visually impaired, in order to find out what to do about way-finding and Talking Signs™?

<u>Communication: Getting information about public services, benefits, and activities</u>

4. At this time, how do you learn about or receive information from City departments about public services, benefits, and activities? (e.g., phone menu, talking computer, cassette tape, braille, large print, Channel 2, word of mouth)
    a. Are there other ways you would prefer to get information?

b. Do you feel like you know about services, benefits, and activities that someone with vision would find out about via the web or the newspaper?

5. Have you ever received written communication from a City department that you already had notified you are not able to read regular print? Have you ever received an accommodation for reading from a City department?

6. In your opinion, how should we ask the general population about this issue of communications and getting information about services, benefits, and activities?

7. How would you describe your level of knowledge about disability rights? [*Show of hands: High/Medium/Low*]

8. In your opinion, what is the general level of knowledge of disability rights in the BLV community?

9. What would be the best way to ask about knowledge of disability rights or to gauge this in a telephone survey?

Art and Recreation

10. How important is access to the arts to you (e.g., visual arts, dance, movies, opera recreation)? [*Show of hands: h/m/l*]

11. How much would you use and value these different forms of access to the arts: Braille, large print, audio descriptions, or audio-described docent tours?

12. What are the best means to make public art accessible to people with visual disabilities?

13. How should we ask the community about their needs in this area?

Prioritizing City Services

We're going to switch gears now and talk more generally about priorities. As you know, we are interested in your opinions related to your experiences, and the

needs and priorities of the community related to accessing City services. We are talking about services grouped into six areas, some of which we already have been discussing. These areas include:

- Housing
- Public health and social services
- Public paths and travel
- Public safety and emergency services
- Arts and recreation
- Administrative services and civic participation

14. Thinking about these six areas of City services, <u>what are the top two areas</u> or issues that are of most importance to you? *[straw poll by hand count]*

15. Is there anything missing from this list that is especially important to the community or where accessibility most needs to be addressed?

Now we're going to talk about this group's top choice in more detail, regarding your experience using services, barriers and supports to using the services in this area, and what you would need to access them. We'll also ask you to reflect on what you would ask the larger community about their needs and priorities*. [If straw poll shows public paths and/or arts and recreation as the top issues, ask the group if there is still more to discuss about these areas.]*

16. What is your experience with [<u>talk about top priority #1</u>] areas in San Francisco?

    a. Do you access these services?
    b. What gets in the way? What is the biggest barrier to access?
    c. What helps you? What has worked? What creative accommodations have you developed?
    d. What else would you need to be able to use these services?

17. What questions would you ask the community about this area?

[If time allows, repeat with priority area #2.]

[Additional questions related to particular areas, if any are selected as a top priority.]

a. Public Safety: What is your experience with using safety and emergency services in San Francisco? Have you ever been in a situation in which you felt your safety was at risk? If so, what would have prevented that situation or helped you?
b. Administrative Services: What are the current and future preferred modes of voting for the Blind and Low Vision (BLV) community?
c. Public Health & Social Services: Do you feel you've gotten equal treatment and/or good services? Do you believe the services you receive are equitable and that you have equal access to them?
d. Housing: Have you had difficulty finding housing and/or finding services that can assist you with housing?

18. Do you have anything else to add?

Thank you for your participation!

ID NUMBER: THG 0 _ _ _

BLVPP Phone Survey Instrument and Script

Hello, my name is _____ and I am calling on behalf of the LightHouse for the Blind and the Mayor's Office on Disability. May I please speak with _____ [enter respondent's name]?

We are calling to ask for your opinions about access for people who are blind or low vision to city services in San Francisco. If you agree to be part of this phone survey, all of your responses will be kept confidential. It is your choice to answer these questions. You can refuse to answer a question or stop at any time. There will be no attempt to sell you anything.

In appreciation for your participation, you will receive a 10% discount at Adaptations, the LightHouse store, and a free mini-radio. Your participation in this survey will help the City to improve the quality of the services that it provides to persons who are blind and low vision in San Francisco.

[Interviewer note: If asked, "How did you get my name?" Read: The LightHouse provided us with a list of community members' names and phone numbers. I'm from The Henne Group, a professional phone surveying company, and The LightHouse has contracted with us to make these calls.]

1. **Would you be willing to talk with me for 20 minutes about city services in San Francisco?**

    a. Yes
        i. If Yes, Great!
    b. No
        i. If No, is there a more convenient time? _____
        Else record reason, thank and terminate interview _____
        _____
        OR go to request to participate.

2. Do you live in San Francisco?

a. Yes
    i. If Yes, What is your zip code? _____
b. No
    i. If No, How many times do you visit or come to San Francisco each year? _____ [if fewer than 2, thank and terminate the interview. To terminate interviewer reads: "We are surveying people who either live in San Francisco or visit the city multiple times per year and because you visit the city fewer than two times per year, that is all the questions I have for you. Thank you for your willingness to participate in the survey."]

2. If you are comfortable telling me, what is your age? [if under 18, thank and terminate the survey by reading, "At this time, we are only able to interview people 18 and over. Thank you for willingness to participate in the survey."]

a. Numerical age _____
b. Decline to state

3. [interviewer should assume Gender and record at this point]

4. Ignoring the legal definition of blindness just for the moment, do you consider yourself: [interviewer will have text of legal definition of blindness]

a. Blind
b. Low vision
c. Other [volunteer only]
d. Neither
    ii. If Neither, is there someone in your household who is blind or low vision whom I could speak to?
        1. If No, to terminate interviewer reads: "We are surveying people who are either blind or low vision. Because you are not blind or low vision, that is all the questions I have for you. Thank you for your willingness to participate in the survey." Okay to provide incentive.
        2. If Yes, but person is not present schedule a callback.

[Interviewer note: Terminate the interview if responses cannot be understood clearly in English. To terminate interviewer reads: "Thank you that is all the questions I have for you. Thank you for your willingness to participate in the survey.]

Now I'm going to ask you some questions about travel and public pathways on the street, on transportation and in public buildings in San Francisco.

5. On average, how often do you get out and walk in San Francisco?

a. Daily
b. Weekly
c. Monthly
d. Several times a year
e. Never [if Never, skip to Q9]

6. When you are walking in San Francisco, which of the following methods do you use to get around? Please answer yes or no for each. Do you use:
[read through list, record "Don't Know" as NO]

a. Audible signals at crosswalks [e.g., beep or chirp to indicate traffic flow]	YES	NO
b. Other sounds at crosswalks [e.g. traffic sounds]	YES	NO
c. Braille signs	YES	NO
d. Raised bumps on street corners showing traffic direction	YES	NO
e. Tactile strips to follow on sidewalk	YES	NO
f. Other tactile cues that you notice [e.g., changes in sidewalk grade]	YES	NO
g. Global positioning via a cell phone or pager	YES	NO
h. Infrared signage for which you carry a receiver	YES	NO
i. Long cane	YES	NO
j. Guide dog	YES	NO
k. Your available vision [if low vision]	YES	NO
l. Assistance from a sighted person	YES	NO
m. Other: [volunteer only] _____		

7. **When you are walking in San Francisco, which of the following approaches would you find <u>most helpful</u> in getting around?** [limit responses to 2 of the following]

    a. Audible signals at crosswalks
    b. Braille signs
    c. Raised bumps on street corners showing traffic direction
    d. Tactile strip to follow on sidewalk
    e. Global positioning via a cell phone or pager
    f. Infrared signage for which you carry a receiver
    g. Other: [volunteer only] _____

8. **When you are walking in San Francisco:** [read a through c, with response options]

    a. How often do you encounter intrusions into your path of travel? [e.g. street furniture, street signs, or construction areas without proper barriers]
        Always
        Often
        Sometimes
        Rarely
        Never

    b. How often do you encounter overhangs or obstructions that are not cane detectable? [e.g., awnings, signs, parked cars]
        Always
        Often
        Sometimes
        Rarely
        Never

    c. How often do you encounter bicyclists, skate boarders, or other vehicles on the sidewalk?
        Always
        Often
        Sometimes
        Rarely
        Never

9. **I'd like to know what method you would prefer to find your way around inside city government buildings. I'm going to ask you to choose two from the following list. Inside government buildings would you prefer:** [limit to 2 responses]

a. Personal assistance [e.g., from staff, a help desk]
b. Informational technology [e.g., such as Talking Signs™ with receivers located on site]
c. Tactile cues, maps, or something you can feel [e.g., Braille on door signs]
d. Initial orientation and then independent use from memory
e. Other [volunteer only] _____
f. Don't know/no opinion

10. Many buildings have large print and tactile emergency evacuation signs, exit maps or directions you can touch and feel, located near the elevators. Have you ever used a tactile evacuation sign?

a. Yes [skip to 10A]
b. No [skip to 11]
c. Don't Know [skip to 11]

10A. Has a tactile sign ever made it easier for you to locate an emergency exit?

a. Yes
b. No
c. Don't Know

11. I'm going to read you a list of five options. Please tell me which two would be <u>most useful</u> to you in finding an emergency exit? [limit to 2 options]

a. Directions in Braille
b. Directions in large print
c. Directions in raised lettering
d. Automatic audio announcements in an emergency
e. Staff assistance in exiting the building safely
f. Other: [volunteer only] _____
g. Don't know/no opinion

12. How often do you ride public transport in San Francisco?

a. Always
b. Often
c. Sometimes
d. Rarely
e. Never [If "Never, skip to Q14]

13. I'm going to read you a list of six choices. Please tell me which two are or would be <u>most</u> <u>useful</u> to you for riding public transportation in San Francisco. [limit to 2 choices]

a. Route and schedule information available by phone or internet
b. "Talking" buses or MUNI trains [e.g., stops are announced through an automated system on the outside and inside of the vehicle]
c. Bus stops or MUNI train stops that announce what bus is coming
d. Bus stops or MUNI train stops that tell you what routes stop there
e. A driver who is helpful and freely gives information
f. Other public transit workers who are helpful
g. Other: [volunteer only] _____
h. Don't know/no opinion

14. I'm going to read you a list of three choices. From these choices, what is generally the best way for you to receive information when you are finding your way in San Francisco? [choose one]

a. Through a button you find and press [skip to Q15]
b. Through a device you would carry with you [skip to Q16]
c. Through a audio broadcasts or other audible information [skip to Q17]
d. Other [volunteer only] _____
e. Don't know/no opinion

15. For a button you find and press, would you prefer: [choose one]

a. A button with consistent placement, in a specific place at a bus stop or intersection OR
b. A button you find via a locator sign
c. Other: [volunteer only] _____
d. Don't know/no opinion

[Skip to Q18]

16. For a device you carry with you, would you prefer: [choose one]

a. A global positioning system on a cell phone or pager you carry OR
b. An infrared signal on a receiver you carry
c. Other: [volunteer only] _____
d. Don't know/no opinion

[Skip to Q18]

17. For audible information, would you prefer: [choose one]

a. A motion detector that your presence triggers to start the information OR
b. A button you must press OR
c. Routine audio broadcasts every few seconds
d. Other: [volunteer only] _____
e. Don't know/no opinion

18. In the past year, because of your visual impairment:

a. How often have you encountered physical obstacles to getting around in San Francisco (e.g., sidewalk obstructions)?
   Always
   Often
   Sometimes
   Rarely
   Never

b. How often have you encountered communication access barriers in San Francisco (e.g., not enough signage, materials, and labeling)?
   Always
   Often
   Sometimes
   Rarely
   Never

c. How often have you encountered lack of sensitivity or responsiveness by San Francisco city workers?
   Always
   Often
   Sometimes
   Rarely
   Never

Communication & Disability Rights

19. At this time, how do you receive information from San Francisco city departments about public services, benefits, or activities? [read list and circle all that apply]

a. Braille
b. Cassette tape
c. Internet or Email [e.g., talking computer]
d. Large print by mail

e. Automated Phone menu
f. Talking to a city official on the phone
g. Radio
h. TV
i. Other: [volunteer only] _____
j. None of the above

20. Of these options, which <u>two</u> are the <u>most useful</u> ways for you to receive information from city departments? [choose two]

a. Braille
b. Cassette tape
c. Internet or Email [e.g., talking computer]
d. Large print by mail
e. Automated Phone menu
f. Talking to a city official on the phone
g. Radio
h. TV
i. Other: [volunteer only]
j. Don't know/no opinion

From time to time, cities like San Francisco present public art exhibits in public spaces, sidewalks, or in front of buildings.

21. If public art exhibits in the city were more accessible, how important would it be for you to be able to experience them?

k. Not at all important [Skip to Q23]
l. Somewhat important
m. Important
n. Very important
o. Don't know/no opinion [Skip to Q23]

22. What would be the <u>best</u> way for you to experience public art exhibits, which are mainly visual? [choose one]

a. Through an audio description at the site where the art is located
b. Through phone number to call for a description of the art [skip to 24]
c. Through a miniature model at the site that you could touch and feel [skip to 24]
d. Through a Braille, audio, or large print description available off-site, at the library or other convenient location [skip to 24]
e. Other: [volunteer only] _____ [skip to 24]
f. Don't know/no opinion [skip to 24]

23. For an audio description at the site where the art is located, would you prefer to hear it by: [choose one]

a. Pushing a button for an audible description
b. Carrying a special receiver to pick up an infrared signal that then provides an audible description
c. Wearing personal headphones to receive an audible description

Now I have a few questions for you about your rights as a person who is blind or low vision.

24. As a person who is blind or low vision, you have the right to ask staff of city programs to provide you with information in an "alternative format," such as Braille, large print, on tape, on computer disk, or by reading information to you on the spot. Were you aware of this?

a. Yes
b. No
c. Other/I knew some of that [volunteer only]

25. In the last five years, have you ever asked for assistance to access San Francisco city services?

a. Yes [skip to Q26]
b. No [skip to Q25A]
c. Don't know [skip to Q26]
d. Decline to state [skip to Q26]

25A. If No, was this for any of the following reasons:

a. Because you did not know you could
b. Because you felt uncomfortable asking
e. Because you not need assistance
a. Other [volunteer only] _____
f. Decline to state

26. In the last five years, have you received assistance because of your disability from a San Francisco city employee that was inadequate or inappropriate?

a. Yes
    i. [If yes] From which city department or service?
    _____
b. No

c. Not sure
d. Decline to state

27. If your rights as a person who is blind or low vision were not being met, did you know you could call the Mayor's Office on Disability to make a complaint? [If asked, provide the Mayor's Office on Disability office phone number: (415) 554-6789]

a. Yes
b. No
c. Not sure
d. Decline to state

The City of San Francisco provides hundreds of programs and services. For this survey, I'm going to be asking you about the accessibility of city services divided into six broad areas.

28. The first is public transportation, travel and pathways. For example: Muni, paratransit, taxi, city parking and facilities, sidewalks and pedestrian crossings.

On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 = not at all important, and 7 = extremely important, how important is it to you that access for people who are blind or low vision to transportation, travel, and pathways in San Francisco is improved?

1 = Not at all important
2
3
4
5
6
7 = Extremely important
8 = No opinion/declined to state

29. The second is Public Health and Social Services. For example: SF General Hospital and community clinics, home delivered and group meals, in home support services, protective services and shelters, animal care and control.

On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 = not at all important, and 7 = extremely important, how important is it to you that access for people who are blind or low vision to public health and social services in San Francisco

is improved?

1 = Not at all important
2
3
4
5
6
7 = Extremely important
8 = No opinion/declined to state

30. The third is Public Safety. For example: police, fire, adult and juvenile probation, trial courts, public defense and prosecution.

On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 = not at all important, and 7 = extremely important, how important is it to you that access for people who are blind or low vision to public safety and emergency services in San Francisco is improved?

1 = Not at all important
2
3
4
5
6
7 = Extremely important
8 = No opinion/declined to state

31. The fourth is Arts and recreation. For example: performing arts events and museums, public library, parks and recreation centers, the zoo.

On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 = not at all important, and 7 = extremely important, how important is it to you that access for people who are blind or low vision to arts and recreation in San Francisco is improved?

1 = Not at all important
2
3
4
5
6
7 = Extremely important
8 = No opinion/declined to state

32. **The fifth is Housing.** For example: low-income and supportive housing, homeless and emergency shelters.

On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 = not at all important, and 7 = extremely important, how important is it to you that access for people who are blind or low vision to public housing services in San Francisco is improved?

1 = Not at all important
2
3
4
5
6
7 = Extremely important
8 = No opinion/declined to state

33. **The sixth is Administrative Services.** For example: elections and voting, elected offices, Board of Supervisors meetings, city commissions, public utilities, and the city television and website.

On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 = not at all important, and 7 = extremely important, how important is it to you that access for people who are blind or low vision to city administrative services in San Francisco is improved?

1 = Not at all important
2
3
4
5
6
7 = Extremely important
8 = No opinion/declined to state

34. If you had to choose <u>one</u> of these six areas for the City of San Francisco to improve and increase access for people who are blind or low vision, which one would be your top priority? [read list]

a. Public transportation, travel, and pathways
b. Public health and social services
c. Public safety
d. Arts and recreation
e. Housing
f. Administrative services
g. Other: [volunteer only] _____
h. No opinion/Decline to state

35. Which one of the following three reasons best describes the main reason you chose this priority: [choose one]

a. You use services in this area most frequently
b. Services in this area impact the greatest number of people who are blind or low vision
c. You or someone you know has personally encountered barriers to access in this area
d. Other: [volunteer only] _____
e. No opinion/Decline to state

<u>Demographic Characteristics Section</u>

Now I'm going to ask you for some census-type information about yourself. It is completely optional for you to answer these questions.

36. What is your <u>Race/Ethnicity</u> [all that apply]

a. African American/Black
b. African/Afro-Caribbean
c. American Indian/Native American
d. Arab/Middle Eastern
e. Asian
f. Pacific Islander
g. Caucasian/White
h. Latino/a or Hispanic
i. Southeast Asian
j. Biracial/Multiracial
k. Other: [volunteer only] _____
l. Decline to state

37. If you're comfortable telling me this information, in the past year, what was your <u>total individual income</u>? I'll read some income brackets to you. Please tell me which one you fit into best.

a. Under $15,000
b. $15,000 to $29,999
c. $30,000 to $49,999
d. $50,000 to $74,999
e. $75,000 to $99,999
f. $100,000 or more
g. Decline to state

Thank you for your answering my questions. To compensate you for the time you have spent answering my questions I'd like to give you a code that you can use to receive a 10% discount and get a free mini-radio at Adaptations, the LightHouse store. Do you have a way to write down this code number now? If you have any questions about how to use this code, you can call the number for Adaptations: (415) 431-1481. [Lighthouse address is: 214 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco]

If you would like to talk to someone in greater detail about suggestions you have to improve services, or if you have any questions about this survey, you also can call the Mayor's Office on Disability at (415) 554-6789.

<u>Definition – Legally Blind</u>
A person is considered LEGALLY blind when the best corrected visual acuity is 20/200, or the person's visual field is 20 degrees or less. It is not true that all blind persons have absolutely no sight; in fact, most blind persons have some remaining vision. A person may be considered visually impaired when he/she can no longer drive safely, has difficulty reading a newspaper, or cannot see objects to the side.

CALL LENGTH _____ minutes

BLVPP Community Events
Focus Group Protocol & Questions

Overview & Introduction

I want to begin by thanking you for being here today. As you just heard, this project is dedicated to learning about the priorities of people who are blind and low vision, related to accessing San Francisco city services. As we talk, please keep in mind that the broad questions we are trying to answer together are: How can the City of San Francisco do a better job for people who are blind and low vision? What areas should the City pay attention to first?

I'm going to give you some guidelines for our discussion and then we'll dive into the questions.

Guidelines for Discussion

- I'm going to ask for everyone's cooperation to keep us moving through the prepared list of discussion questions since we have many questions and a limited amount of time together.
- This group will run about 1-1/2 hours without a formal break. Feel free to take breaks on your own as needed. The Men's Restroom is Room 417 and the Women's is Room 483.
- There are no right or wrong answers. Please respect what others have to say, even when their opinion is different from yours. It would be great if we can hear from everyone during today's discussion.
- Please speak one at a time—this will help the note taker capture everyone's thoughts and opinions. If the note taker gets behind or needs clarification, she'll speak up or signal me.
- If you agree with what someone says, please speak up rather than nodding your head or gesturing in some way.
- Please remember to say your name before making a comment or answering a question, so that everyone knows who is speaking.

Does anyone have other ground rules they would like to propose?

- *If needed, ask for permission to audio record:* I would like to use an audio recorder to capture today's conversation, in order to back up our notes in case there's anything we miss. Is there anyone who would prefer not to be recorded? [*If so, do not record the session.]*

Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Discussion Questions

Let's start by introducing ourselves.

Quick go-around with names and perhaps one other quick and relevant piece of information, e.g., whether participants live in San Francisco or if not how often they come to the City.

During this discussion, we are basically going to ask you two kinds of questions. First, we are going to ask for your reactions to some scenarios. We'll describe a situation, and then we'll ask you several follow-up questions about what the City should do or provide in the situation. Second, some of our questions will ask for your opinions about the results of the survey the LightHouse and Mayor's Office on Disability recently completed, so that we can fill in the details about what these results mean.

1. Here is the first scenario. The City of San Francisco has purchased accessible voting equipment. Every polling place in the City now is equipped with one talking voting machine. For purposes of this scenario, imagine that it's Election Day and each of you must go and vote in person at your designated polling place.

    a. I'm going to ask for two people's responses: What would you need to get to the poll and complete the voting process?
    b. I'm going to ask everyone: What should the City provide to make this possible?

2. Most survey respondents clearly indicated that among several areas of city services, transportation was the top priority area for improving accessibility.

    a. Is this true for you? [*This could be done via a straw poll, reflecting back a quick show of hands of who would agree/disagree.*]

b. What technology could make using public transportation, such as MUNI buses or trains, BART trains, or Paratransit, easier for you?
c. What else should the City do first to make sure you can get where you need to go, using public transportation?

3. I have some general follow-up questions about travel and getting around.

    a. What kinds of intrusions and obstacles do you encounter when walking in San Francisco?
    b. How is else is travel a challenge for you in San Francisco?
    c. What would make it easier?

4. The survey found that in a variety of settings, respondents prefer auditory technology. They preferred auditory technology, which produces sounds, to cross at street corners, to receive a description of public art, to exit a building in an emergency, or on "talking buses."

    a. Is this true for you? [*This could be via a straw poll.*]
    b. What are the benefits and drawbacks of audible technology?
    c. What do you think about Talking Signs™?

5. [*If it seems like time is getting short, please skip to Questions 6 and 8*] Survey respondents also preferred staff assistance inside public buildings for getting around and in an emergency situation.

    a. Would you agree with this? [*This could be via a straw poll.*]
    b. In your opinion, what would the City need to consider if it followed the recommendation of providing more staff assistance?

6. Under the ADA, the City is required to provide materials in alternative formats such as Braille, audio, electronic text, and large print. In this next scenario, imagine that the Department of Public Health is providing information to San Francisco residents on the flu pandemic.

    a. How would you need to receive this information? [*Generate a quick list of formats*.]
    b. What else should the City do to make sure that you get the information you need?

c. We were surprised by the low incidence of Braille use among survey respondents. What is your opinion about why people aren't using Braille for public navigation and information?

7. [*If time is short, please skip to Question 8*.] Here is our final scenario. Imagine that you need to go to City Hall to pay taxes, and the staff person at the Treasurer's office will not help you fill out the forms.

    a. I'm going to ask for just two people's responses here: What would you do?
    b. Now I'm going to ask everyone: What should the City do to remedy this situation?

8. If you were Mayor of San Francisco for one day, what else would you do to improve access for people who are blind or low vision?

9. Is there anything else that I haven't asked you about, related to your priorities for improving San Francisco city services, that you think the LightHouse and the Mayor's Office on Disability should know?

Thank you so much for being part of this discussion! We'll now move back into Room 408 to rejoin the large group for a "Know Your Rights" presentation by the Mayor's Office on Disability. Following that presentation, to show our appreciation for your participation today, you will receive a $10 gift card for groceries. Thank you!

BLVPP Community Events
Focus Group Protocol & Questions

Overview & Introduction

I want to begin by thanking you for being here today. This discussion is part of the Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project, which is a community needs assessment project dedicated to learning about the priorities of people who are blind, low vision, and deaf-blind, related to accessing San Francisco city services. As part of this project, we did a telephone survey and have been following up with several focus groups. Today's discussion is one of those groups.

As we talk today, please keep in mind that the broad questions we are trying to answer together are: How can the City of San Francisco do a better job for people who are deaf-blind? What areas should the City pay attention to first?

I'm going to give you some guidelines for our discussion and then we'll dive into the questions.

Guidelines for Discussion

- We are going to go through a prepared list of discussion questions. We have many questions and a limited amount of time together, so I will be asking questions and facilitating to keep us moving. I am relatively new to the format of working with interpreters, so please do excuse me for mistakes I make. Let me know if we are moving too quickly.
- This group will run about 1-1/2 hours without a formal break. Feel free to take breaks on your own as needed.
- There are no right or wrong answers. Please respect what others have to say, even when their opinion is different from yours. It would be great if we can get everyone's input during today's discussion.
- Please speak one at a time—this will help the note taker capture everyone's thoughts and opinions. If the note taker gets behind or needs clarification, she'll signal me.
- If you agree with what someone says, please speak up rather than nodding your head or gesturing in some way.

- Please remember to say your name before making a comment or answering a question, so that everyone knows who is speaking.

Does anyone have other ground rules they would like to propose?

Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Discussion Questions

Let's start by introducing ourselves.

Quick go-around with names and perhaps one other quick and relevant piece of information, e.g., whether participants live in San Francisco or if not how often they come to the City. How did you get here today?

During this discussion, we are basically going to ask you two kinds of questions. First, we are going to ask for your reactions to some scenarios. We'll describe a situation, and then we'll ask you several follow-up questions about what the City should do or provide in the situation. Second, some of our questions will ask for your opinions about the results of the survey the LightHouse and Mayor's Office on Disability recently completed, so that we can fill in the details about what these results mean.

1. Here is the first scenario. The City of San Francisco has purchased accessible voting equipment. Every polling place in the City now is equipped with one talking voting machine. For purposes of this scenario, imagine that it's Election Day and each of you must go and vote in person at your designated polling place.

    a. I'm going to ask for two people's responses: What would you need to get to the poll and complete the voting process?
    b. I'm going to ask everyone: What should the City provide to make this possible?

2. Most survey respondents clearly indicated that among several areas of city services, transportation was the top priority area for improving accessibility.

a. Is this true for you? [*This could be done via a straw poll, reflecting back a quick show of hands of who would agree/disagree*.]
b. What technology could make using public transportation, such as MUNI buses or trains, BART trains, or Paratransit, easier for you?
c. What else should the City do first to make sure you can get where you need to go, using public transportation?

3. I have some general follow-up questions about travel and getting around.

    a. What kinds of intrusions and obstacles do you encounter when walking in San Francisco?
    b. How is else is travel a challenge for you in San Francisco?
    c. What would make it easier?

4. Survey respondents also preferred staff assistance inside public buildings for getting around and in an emergency situation.

    a. Would you agree with this? [*This could be via a straw poll.*]
    b. In your opinion, what would the City need to consider if it followed the recommendation of providing more staff assistance?

5. Under the ADA, the City is required to provide materials in alternative formats such as Braille, audio, electronic text, and large print. In this next scenario, imagine that the Department of Public Health is providing information to San Francisco residents on the flu pandemic.

    a. How would you need to receive this information? [*Generate a quick list of formats*.]
    b. What else should the City do to make sure that you get the information you need?
    c. We were surprised by the low incidence of Braille use among survey respondents. What is your opinion about why many people aren't using Braille for public navigation and information?

6. Here is our final scenario. Imagine that you need to go to City Hall to conduct business, and the staff person in the office you go to will not help you fill out the forms.

a. I'm going to ask for just two people's responses here: What would you do?
b. Now I'm going to ask everyone: What should the City do to remedy this situation?

7. If you were Mayor of San Francisco for one day, what else would you do to improve access for people who are deaf-blind?

8. Is there anything else that I haven't asked you about, related to your priorities for improving San Francisco city services, that you think the LightHouse and the Mayor's Office on Disability should know?

Thank you so much for being part of this discussion!

We'll now have a brief "Know Your Rights" presentation by Susan Mizner, from the Mayor's Office on Disability. Following that presentation, to show our appreciation for your participation today, you will receive a $10 gift card for groceries. Thank you!

BLVPP Community Events
Focus Group Protocol & Questions – Spanish Group

Overview & Introduction

I want to begin by thanking you for being here today. Our discussion today is part of a year-long project called the Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project, jointly sponsored by the LightHouse for the Blind and the San Francisco Mayor's Office on Disability. This project is dedicated to learning about the priorities of people who are blind and low vision, related to accessing San Francisco city services. As I mentioned, it has been going for the past year, and has included a community survey by phone and a series of focus group discussions, of which today's conversation is one. I will be asking you a several questions about your experiences with city services in San Francisco. As we talk, please keep in mind that the broad questions we are trying to answer together are: How can the City of San Francisco do a better job for people who are blind and low vision? What areas should the City pay attention to first?

I'm going to give you some guidelines for our discussion and then I'll give you a chance to introduce yourselves before we dive into the questions.

Guidelines for Discussion

- I'm going to ask for everyone's cooperation to keep us moving through the prepared list of discussion questions since we have many questions and a limited amount of time together.
- This group will run about 1-1/2 hours without a formal break. Feel free to take breaks on your own as needed.
- There are no right or wrong answers. Please respect what others have to say, even when their opinion is different from yours. It would be great if we can hear from everyone during today's discussion.
- Please speak one at a time—this will help the note taker capture everyone's thoughts and opinions. If the note taker gets behind or needs clarification, she'll speak up or signal me.
- Please remember to give your name before making a comment or answering a question, so that everyone knows who is speaking.

- To show our appreciation for your time today, each of you will receive a $10 Safeway gift card at the end of this discussion group.

Does anyone have other ground rules they would like to propose?

Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Discussion Questions

Let's start by introducing ourselves.

Quick go-around with names and perhaps one other quick and relevant piece of information, e.g., How did you travel here today? Do you live in San Francisco or if not how often do you come to the City?

During this discussion, we are basically going to ask you two kinds of questions. First, we are going to ask for your reactions to some scenarios. We'll describe a situation, and then we'll ask you several follow-up questions about what the City should do or provide in the situation. Second, some of our questions will ask for your opinions about the results of the survey the LightHouse and Mayor's Office on Disability recently completed, so that we can fill in the details about what these results mean.

1. Here is the first scenario. The City of San Francisco has purchased accessible voting equipment. Every polling place in the City now is equipped with one talking voting machine. For purposes of this scenario, imagine that it's Election Day and each of you must go and vote in person at your designated polling place.

    a. I'm going to ask for two people's responses: What would you need to get to the poll and complete the voting process?
    b. I'm going to ask everyone: What should the City provide to make this possible?

2. Most survey respondents clearly indicated that among several areas of city services, transportation was the top priority area for improving accessibility.

a. Is this true for you? [*This could be done via a straw poll, reflecting back a quick show of hands of who would agree/disagree.*]
b. What technology could make using public transportation, such as MUNI buses or trains, BART trains, or Paratransit, easier for you?
c. What else should the City do first to make sure you can get where you need to go, using public transportation?

3. I have some general follow-up questions about travel and getting around.

    a. What kinds of intrusions and obstacles do you encounter when walking in San Francisco?
    b. How is else is travel a challenge for you in San Francisco?
    c. What would make it easier?

4. The survey found that in a variety of settings, respondents prefer auditory technology. They preferred auditory technology, which produces sounds, to cross at street corners, to receive a description of public art, to exit a building in an emergency, or on "talking buses."

    a. Is this true for you? [*This could be via a straw poll.*]
    b. What are the benefits and drawbacks of audible technology?
    c. Would audible technology still be beneficial if your primary language is one other than English?
    d. What do you think about Talking Signs™?

5. [*If it seems like time is getting short, please skip to Questions 6 and 8*] Survey respondents also preferred staff assistance inside public buildings for getting around and in an emergency situation.

    a. Would you agree with this? [*This could be via a straw poll.*]
    b. In your opinion, what would the City need to consider if it followed the recommendation of providing more staff assistance?

6. Under the ADA, the City is required to provide materials in alternative formats such as Braille, audio, electronic text, and large print. In this next scenario, imagine that the Department of Public Health is providing information to San Francisco residents on the flu pandemic.

    a. How would you need to receive this information? [*Generate a quick list of formats*.]

b. What else should the City do to make sure that you get the information you need?
c. We were surprised by the low incidence of Braille use among survey respondents. What is your opinion about why people aren't using Braille for public navigation and information?

7. [*If time is short, please skip to Question 8*.] Here is our final scenario. Imagine that you need to go to City Hall to conduct business, and the staff person in the office you go to will not help you fill out the forms.

    a. I'm going to ask for just two people's responses here: What would you do?
    b. Now I'm going to ask everyone: What should the City do to remedy this situation?

8. If you were Mayor of San Francisco for one day, what else would you do to improve access for people who are blind or low vision?

9. Is there anything else that I haven't asked you about, related to your priorities for improving San Francisco city services, that you think the LightHouse and the Mayor's Office on Disability should know?

Thank you so much for being part of this discussion! We'll now receive a "Know Your Rights" presentation by the Mayor's Office on Disability. Following that presentation, to show our appreciation for your participation today, you will receive a $10 gift card for groceries. Thank you!

BLVPP Community Events
Focus Group Protocol & Questions
Youth Group February 20, 2007

Overview & Introduction

I want to begin by thanking you for being here today. Our discussion today is part of a year-long project called the Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project, jointly sponsored by the LightHouse for the Blind and the San Francisco Mayor's Office on Disability. This project is dedicated to learning about the priorities of people who are blind and low vision, related to accessing San Francisco city services.

As I mentioned, it has been going for the past year, and has included a community survey by phone and a series of focus group discussions, of which today's conversation is one. I will be asking you a several questions about your experiences with city services in San Francisco. As we talk, please keep in mind that the broad questions we are trying to answer together are: How can the City of San Francisco do a better job for people who are blind and low vision? What areas should the City pay attention to first?

I'm going to give you some guidelines for our discussion and then we'll dive into the questions.

Guidelines for Discussion

- I'm going to ask for everyone's cooperation to keep us moving through the prepared list of discussion questions since we have many questions and a limited amount of time together.
- This group will run about 1-1/2 hours without a formal break. Feel free to take breaks on your own as needed.
- There are no right or wrong answers. Please respect what others have to say, even when their opinion is different from yours. It would be great if we can hear from everyone during today's discussion.
- Please speak one at a time—this will help the note taker capture everyone's thoughts and opinions. If the note taker gets behind or needs clarification, she'll speak up or signal me.

- If you agree with what someone says, please speak up rather than nodding your head or gesturing in some way.
- Please remember to say your name before making a comment or answering a question, so that everyone knows who is speaking.

Does anyone have other ground rules they would like to propose?

Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Discussion Questions

Let's start by introducing ourselves.

Quick go-around with names and perhaps one other piece of information, e.g., Your name, your age, whether you live in SF, how you got here today.
During this discussion, we are basically going to ask you two kinds of questions. First, we are going to ask for your reactions to some scenarios. We'll describe a situation, and then we'll ask you several follow-up questions about what the City should do or provide in the situation. Second, some of our questions will ask for your opinions about the results of the survey the LightHouse and Mayor's Office on Disability recently completed, so that we can fill in the details about what these results mean.

1. Here is the first scenario. The City of San Francisco has purchased accessible voting equipment. Every polling place in the City now is equipped with one talking voting machine. For purposes of this scenario, imagine that it's Election Day and each of you must go and vote in person at your designated polling place. [*This question may not come first, depending on ages of participants.]*

    a. I'm going to ask for two people's responses: What would you need to get to the poll and complete the voting process?
    b. I'm going to ask everyone: What should the City provide to make this possible?

2. Most survey respondents clearly indicated that among several areas of city services, transportation was the top priority area for improving accessibility.

    a. Is this true for you? [*This could be done via a straw poll, reflecting back a quick show of hands of who would agree/disagree.*]

b. What technology could make using public transportation, such as MUNI buses or trains, BART trains, or Paratransit, easier for you?
c. What else should the City do first to make sure you can get where you need to go, using public transportation?

3. I have some general follow-up questions about travel and getting around.

    a. What kinds of intrusions and obstacles do you encounter when walking in San Francisco?
    b. How is else is travel a challenge for you in San Francisco?
    c. What would make it easier?

4. The survey found that in a variety of settings, respondents prefer auditory technology. They preferred auditory technology, which produces sounds, to cross at street corners, to receive a description of public art, to exit a building in an emergency, or on "talking buses."

    a. Is this true for you? [*This could be via a straw poll.*]
    b. What are the benefits and drawbacks of audible technology?
    c. What do you think about Talking Signs™?

5. [*If it seems like time is getting short, please skip to Questions 6 and 8*] Survey respondents also preferred staff assistance inside public buildings for getting around and in an emergency situation.

    a. Would you agree with this? [*This could be via a straw poll.*]
    b. In your opinion, what would the City need to consider if it followed the recommendation of providing more staff assistance?

6. Under the ADA, the City is required to provide materials in alternative formats such as Braille, audio, electronic text, and large print. In this next scenario, imagine that the Department of Public Health is providing information to San Francisco residents on the flu pandemic.

    a. How many of you know what the ADA is? [*Show of hands.*]
    b. How would you need to receive this information? [*Generate a quick list of formats*.]

c. What else should the City do to make sure that you get the information you need?
d. We were surprised by the low incidence of Braille use among survey respondents. What is your opinion about why people aren't using Braille for public navigation and information?

7. If you were Mayor of San Francisco for one day, what else would you do to improve access for people who are blind or low vision?

8. Do you think that priorities for young people related to accessing city services would be different than the priorities of older people who are blind and low vision? If so, how?

9. Is there anything else that I haven't asked you about, related to your priorities for improving San Francisco city services, that you think the LightHouse and the Mayor's Office on Disability should know?

Thank you so much for being part of this discussion! We'll now have a "Know Your Rights" presentation by the Mayor's Office on Disability. Following that presentation, to show our appreciation for your participation today, you will receive a gift card for Peet's Coffee. Thank you!

Blind and Low Vision Priorities Project

Report from the LightHouse for the Blind and
San Francisco Mayor's Office on Disability

Prepared by Rachel Lanzerotti, Consultant
May 2007

For More Information:

The LightHouse for the Blind
214 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 431-1481
TTY: 415-431-4572
www.lighthouse-sf.org

San Francisco Mayor's Office on Disability
401 Van Ness Avenue, Room 300
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 554-6789
TTY: (415) 554-6799
www.sfgov.org/mod