

**THE PRESIDIO TRUST  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**RESOLUTION 15-9  
PUBLIC USE LIMITS OF BATTERY CAULFIELD ROAD –  
REVISED DETERMINATION**

WHEREAS, the regulation at [36 C.F.R. 1001.5](#) (Regulation) authorizes the Presidio Trust Board of Directors to impose public use limits and to close all or a portion of the area of the Presidio of San Francisco administered by the Presidio Trust to all public use or to a specific use or activity upon a determination that such action is necessary for the maintenance of public health and safety, the protection of environmental or scenic values, the protection of natural or cultural resources, the implementation of management responsibilities, or the avoidance of conflict among visitor use activities; and

WHEREAS, the Regulation requires that the Board of Directors prepare a written determination setting forth the reasons a public use limit or closure is necessary and an explanation of why less restrictive measures will not suffice; and

WHEREAS, in [Resolution 08-5](#) the Board of Directors adopted a determination addressing why certain use limits in connection with Battery Caulfield Road were necessary and why less restrictive measures would not suffice; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors finds that less restrictive measures put in place since the adoption of Resolution 08-5 have been sufficient to resolve the use conflicts and impact on resources in the affected area;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Presidio Trust Board of Directors hereby rescinds its previous determination that limiting access of motor vehicles to Battery Caulfield Road was necessary; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Directors hereby adopts the attached new determination that less restrictive measures achieve public safety, avoidance of conflict among visitor use, and protection of natural resources and environmental values.

Adopted: February 19, 2015

# STAFF REPORT

**Date** February 19, 2015

**Subject** Restriction of Access to Battery Caulfield Road

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## **Recommendation**

Staff requests that the Board of Directors rescind its previous determination limiting access of motor vehicles to Battery Caulfield Road and adopt a new determination that less restrictive means have achieved public safety, avoidance of conflict among visitor use, and protection of natural resources and environmental values.

## **Background**

Battery Caulfield Road, built by the U.S. Army in 1984, connects the upper and lower plateaus of the Public Health Service Hospital (PHSH) District and connects the southwestern areas of the Presidio with the rest of the park. At the urging of neighbors bordering the PHS District, the Board expressed its intent to restrict use of Battery Caulfield Road in the Trust's April 17, 2007 Record of Decision (ROD) for the development of the district – "The Trust will undertake measures to discourage traffic not destined for the [PHSH District] from passing through the area, including considering restrictions on Battery Caulfield Road to allow passage by [PHSH District] traffic only and will institute traffic-calming techniques to slow traffic through the district." (p. 11, PHS ROD). On November 13, 2007, the Board adopted a determination that limiting access of motor vehicles to Battery Caulfield Road was necessary for public safety, the avoidance of conflict among visitor uses and the protection of natural resources and environmental values. The Board delegated to the Executive Director the authority to decide the extent to which motor vehicles would be permitted on Battery Caulfield Road, and the authority to take the steps necessary to effect such use limitations. (Resolution 08-5). The Trust solicited and received public comment on its proposal to limit vehicular use of Battery Caulfield Road.

The concerns about the deleterious effects of Battery Caulfield Road traffic never materialized in the years between the Board's adoption of its original determination, the public comment period on the proposed use limit and the present. Now that the PHS District is almost fully built out and a new pre-school will soon open on Battery Caulfield Road, it is clear that the restriction of traffic is an extreme measure, that implementation of the use limit would not be in the best interests of the park and the wider community, and that less restrictive means achieve the desired result. Moreover, public comments received in 2010 indicated a widespread lack of support for the proposed use limit.

Factors staff weighed in its recommendation:

**A. Conditions better than EIS predictions.** Staff has monitored traffic conditions over the years, during both the peak commute hours and throughout the day. Monitoring has shown that

although there has been an increase in traffic volumes through the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue gates, there has not been a significant increase in traffic congestion. The increase in volume may reflect development within the PSHH District and other parts of the park, but it likely also reflects changes to circulation patterns associated with Doyle Drive rebuild. The volume of traffic through the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue gates during the evening peak hour is below the number of vehicles forecast in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The actual traffic volume on Battery Caulfield Road remains low compared to many other park roadways. In short, the increase in traffic has not been as great as originally anticipated.

**B. Minor impact on public safety.** The relatively low traffic volumes suggest little cause for concern about public safety. Since 2007, staff has implemented a number of measures to restrict traffic on Battery Caulfield Road including, opening the 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue gate (relieving traffic pressure on the 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue gate and providing for a more circuitous route through the district); narrowing travel lanes on Battery Caulfield Road; installing speed cushions and a cross-walk near the lower portion of Battery Caulfield Road; and installing a STOP sign at the intersection of Wedermeyer Street and 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue. A records search of U.S. Park Police incident reports revealed that there has been less than one accident per year on Battery Caulfield Road during the past eight years.

**C. Minimal visitor use conflicts.** The relatively low traffic volumes also suggest little cause for concern about visitor use conflicts. Staff has installed a marked bike lane (uphill direction) and completed a pedestrian trail (Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail) along Battery Caulfield Road. The bike route (City Bike Route #69) enters the park at the 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue gate and travels along Battery Caulfield Road, converging with the Bay Area Ridge Trail at Washington Boulevard. The improved bikeway and multi-use trail has minimized the potential for conflicts among pedestrians, bicyclists and cars, with only one of the accidents reported above involving a bicyclist and a vehicle (no pedestrian accidents).

**D. No impact on natural resources.** The PSHH District is comprised of both developed areas and open space. Remnant and restored vegetation in the vicinity of Battery Caulfield Road support unique and ecologically significant native plant communities and provide important habitat for wildlife. Staff has implemented mitigation measures identified in the PSHH District EIS to protect native plant communities and wildlife along Battery Caulfield Road, including fencing and placing speed cushions on the road in order to calm traffic and minimize wildlife casualties. Measures in place have proven adequate to protect the resources. No other impacts on park resources and values exist that trigger the need for the use restriction.

**E. Impact on other park users.** Restricting Battery Caulfield Road access to PSHH District residents and workers creates an entitlement for some and a hardship for others (i.e., West Washington neighborhood residents as well as residents of the adjacent Richmond neighborhood) without any corresponding benefits. The NPS expressed similar concerns —“...Restricting access to the Presidio through one gateway could lead to access conflicts in the future for the balance of the Presidio. Restricting vehicles from the use of Battery Caulfield Road could result in a shift of those vehicles to other Presidio gates, increase traffic volumes in other adjacent neighborhoods, and/or result in requests for additional restrictions to other gateways that access the park.” (email

to Michael Boland, Chief Planning, Projects & Programs Officer, from Nancy Hornor, Planning Division Chief, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, dated October 14, 2010).

**F. No precedent in EIS.** Nearby community members requested that the Trust restrict Battery Caulfield Road access to minimize traffic impacts on their neighborhood. The Trust selected an alternative (Modified Alternative 3) and identified mitigation measures in the EIS – Modified Alternative 3 did not restrict access to Battery Caulfield Road. Rather, “in all alternatives, the roadway network and circulation system within the [PHSH] District would be designed to discourage cut-through traffic while retaining Battery Caulfield Road for secondary access, and traffic calming techniques would be used to slow traffic as it passes through the district.” (p. 122, EIS). The EIS Response to Comments states, “The Trust agrees with commenters that measures should be incorporated into the project to slow vehicles and minimize traffic volume in the interest of safety. Traffic calming measures will be provided in the lower plateau and Battery Caulfield Road to discourage traffic cutting through to and from the Golden Gate Bridge. Such measures may include, but would not be limited to, speed tables/raised crosswalks, diverters, and narrowing the roadway.” (p. 46, Battery Caulfield Road Response TR-17, PHS EIS Response to Comments). The traffic analysis in the EIS reflects the use of Battery Caulfield Road as a through road. The ROD identifies the mitigation measures and monitoring and enforcement program that the Trust committed itself to adopt (pp. A-1–A-3, Transportation Mitigation Measures, Public Health Service Hospital Mitigation Monitoring and Enforcement Program, Attachment A).

**G. High degree of public opposition.** Staff is mindful that the Presidio is an integral part of a larger community, and must listen to the concerns of all those who are affected by actions within the park. During the public comment period, the Trust received 159 comments, with most favoring no restrictions to access of Battery Caulfield Road. Many felt the proposed limits were “short-sighted,” “not neighborly,” an “overreaction,” and “absurd,” and were highly suspect of the proposed restriction – “I feel like the Trust is being bullied by some hard-lobbying neighbors on 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue to close access when in reality, it would not best serve the needs of the Richmond District or the residents and businesses in the [PHSH] District.” Of the commenters who supported restricting the use of Battery Caulfield Road, approximately 75 percent had addresses within a two-block radius of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue gates, although support within the immediate area was far from unanimous.

## **Conclusion**

Limiting access of motor vehicles to Battery Caulfield Road would result in a significant alteration in the public-use pattern of the park without sufficient benefit to offset the negative impact to both the park and the broader community. The concerns identified in the determination adopted by the Board of Directors over seven years ago have not materialized. Measures put in place since the Trust initially sought to implement the public use limit adequately resolve use conflicts on Battery Caulfield Road, and reliance on those measures has not adversely impacted resources in the area. It is appropriate that the Board rescind its previous determination and adopt this new determination that less restrictive means have achieved the desired goals.