

EMBARCADERO FREEWAY SAN FRANCISCO, USA

LONGUEUR DU TRACÉ	2,5 km
RÉALISATION	1957
MAÎTRISE D'OUVRAGE	
CAPACITÉ DU RÉSEAU	
TRANSIT APPROXIMATIF	100 000 véhicules / jour

CONTEXTE DE RÉALISATION

Construction de l'Embarcadero Freeway; projet initialement conçu pour relier le Bay Bridge et le Golden Gate Bridge mais jamais complété

Sur ses sections les plus empruntées, l'Embarcadero Freeway enregistre plus de 100 000 véhicules / jour.

17 OCTOBRE 1989

Tremblement de terre de Loma Prieta

2002

Remplacement de l'Embarcadero Freeway par un boulevard urbain

DESCRIPTION DU PROJET

RÔLE

COMPOSITION

TYPE DE STRUCTURE

DIMENSIONNEMENT

LIAISONS

PARTICULARITÉS DU PROJET

MISE EN OEUVRE

SOURCES



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San Francisco's Embarcadero

San Francisco's Embarcadero Freeway was originally designed to connect the Bay Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge but was never completed. The Embarcadero only succeeded in cutting off the city from the waterfront and running long ramps deep into the neighborhood fabric. In the most used sections, traffic on the Embarcadero reached well past 100,000 vehicles per day.

Freeway Removal

The battle to demolish the Embarcadero had been struggling until the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. After the earthquake damaged it beyond repair, the city experienced initial traffic congestion but it did not lead to permanent traffic disruptions. The network of streets was able to absorb a large amount of traffic given their previous underused capacity. In addition, annual BART ridership experienced a 15% increase. The scales of public opinion shifted towards removal when residents saw the redevelopment potential and the cost comparisons. Evolving cost projections, which climbed from \$15 million for strengthening to \$69.5 million for freeway reconstruction, changed the debate in favor of a boulevard—with a final cost less than \$50 million.

The Boulevard

Built in 2002, the Boulevard itself was deemed an impressive success from many different angles. Designed by ROMA Design Group as a dynamic multi-use boulevard, it contains two banks of thoroughfare traffic, 3 lanes going in each direction and a streetcar line running down the center. This allows for the accommodation of significant auto traffic, but also gives residents options other than private vehicles.

Economic Development

The area has sprung to life since the freeway demolition. More than 100 acres of land along the waterfront that had once been dominated by the elevated freeway gave way to a new public plaza and waterfront promenade. Dense commercial development has lined the street, housing in the area increased by 51% and jobs have increased by 23%. High profile redevelopments like the old Ferry Building and Pier 1 have continued to transform the waterfront. Similarly, the old industrial South Market area was redeveloped as a dense, mixed-use neighborhood. As of 2006, the large number of recent assessments in the redesigned area pushed the average sale base year to 2000 compared to the citywide average of 1996.



Embarcadero Freeway and Ferry Building, circa 1960. Source: Telstar Logistics.



The Embarcadero from street level, circa 1980. Source: Telstar Logistics.



After street redesign, circa 2008. Source: BruceTurner.

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LEED-ND COMMENT ON THE DRAFT
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San Francisco's Octavia

San Francisco's Central Freeway was one of two freeways to see their demise after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. Originally envisioned as part of a grand spider web of freeways meant to cross through San Francisco many times over, the Central Freeway grew to nothing more than a spur. Despite the fact that the spur blighted swaths of San Francisco's historic Hayes Valley neighborhood, residents wanted to keep it around, for fear of what the resulting traffic jams might hold. However, since removal, gridlock failed to materialize and the area has seen significant revitalization.

Freeway Removal

After the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, the Central Freeway was rendered unsafe for driving. While the calls for its demolition had existed before this time, they had always been resisted as too vital for urban connectivity. It was argued that closure would surely result in unprecedented traffic jams. However, after the earthquake forcibly closed the highway, the congestion failed to materialize. This allowed for planners to seriously consider its removal. Thanks to generous support from San Francisco's then Mayor Brown and well organized neighborhood organizations, in 1992 the freeway was permanently closed, and by 2002 was rebuilt as a surface grade, multi-use boulevard.

The Boulevard

Built in 2002, The new Octavia Boulevard that was built in the footprint of the old Central Freeway was designed to be both visually appealing and pedestrian friendly. This was accomplished by offering generous landscaping, side lanes for local traffic and parking, and special considerations for details like views from side streets and pedestrian amenities like special light fixtures and brick color. Planners also included the new park, Patricia's Green, as well as generous tree-lined pedestrian walkways.

Economic Development

Before the destruction of the Central Freeway, condominium prices in the Hayes Valley neighborhood were 66% of San Francisco average prices. However, after the demolition and subsequent replacement with the new Octavia Boulevard, prices grew to 91% of city average. Beyond this, the most dramatic increases were seen in the areas nearest to the new boulevard. Furthermore, residents noted a significant change in the nature of the commercial establishments in the area. Where it had been previously populated by liquor stores and mechanic shops, soon the area was teeming with trendy restaurants and high-end boutiques.



Octavia Boulevard Before and After. Source: Mr.Wright, GoogleMaps



Octavia Boulevard looking south , circa 2008. Source: scondomap.com.



After street redesign, circa 2008. Source: Charles Siegel.

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