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## **Report Envisions ‘A Freeway-Free San Francisco’**

*National urban design group proposes steps for urban highway removal*

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**Washington, DC** — Removing San Francisco’s network of urban freeways could spark new development, revitalize nearby neighborhoods, and save the city millions of dollars in maintenance costs over the coming years, according to a new report released today by the national nonprofit the [Congress for the New Urbanism](#) (CNU).

The report, titled [A Freeway-Free San Francisco](#), finds far-reaching benefits in removing five major highways within the city: the I-280 spur, the Central Freeway, I-280, I-80, and ultimately the 101. Replacing those elevated freeways with street-level boulevards in phases, the authors say, could stimulate economic growth and improve access for local residents—all without increasing congestion or impacting travel times by car.

“From Vancouver to Seoul, freeway removal is having a watershed moment in cities worldwide,” said Lynn Richards, President and CEO of the Congress for the New Urbanism, “and San Francisco was one of the earliest pioneers. *A Freeway-Free San Francisco* suggests that there’s more work to be done—and it outlines the steps to get started.”

According to the report, San Francisco’s urban freeways do more harm to the city than good—by locking up valuable real estate, contributing to air pollution, and isolating nearby neighborhoods. Meanwhile, by concentrating drivers around limited access points, certain stretches like I-280 actually generate worse congestion locally than a standard street grid.

For longtime San Franciscans, the idea of removing a freeway may sound familiar. After the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake damaged the elevated Embarcadero, then-Mayor Art Agnos led a successful teardown campaign—one of the nation’s first highway removal projects. The resulting pedestrian-friendly boulevard restored access to the city’s waterfront, and sparked massive redevelopment along a three-mile corridor.

Since then, cities as diverse as Paris, Boston, and Milwaukee have looked to freeway removal to address aging or underperforming infrastructure. In 2005, Seoul, South Korea removed its Cheonggye Expressway to restore an existing streambed while creating a new public green space; the same year, Chattanooga, TN converted its Riverfront Parkway to a low-speed boulevard and a new waterfront park; and in October 2015, the City of Vancouver resolved to remove its last remaining viaducts, the Georgia and the Dunsmuir.

Learn more and read the full report at [cnu.org/freewayfreesf](http://cnu.org/freewayfreesf)