

November 1, 2006 District 5 MUNI Town Hall

Questions relating to Pedestrian Safety

Q. What is the delay in returning Haight to a two-way street?

A. While returning the lower part of Haight near Market to a two-way street has been considered, the reconstruction of Market Street services and improvements such as the F, center islands, etc. makes such an endeavor difficult and would require major additional reconstruction. Therefore there are no current plans to return the lower part of Haight near Market to a two-way street.

Q. Why is there no stop sign or light at 5th Avenue and Irving? What can be done about this intersection? It is very dangerous because of blind spots created by parked cars, and the N Judah train.

A. While we share your concern about traffic and pedestrian safety, due to a variety of factors, our traffic engineers have determined that additional traffic controls at this location are not justified. There is currently an all way stop at 4th and Irving, and a signal at Sixth and Irving and there have been zero pedestrian collisions and only 2 vehicle collisions at this intersection in the past two years. Installation of traffic controls where they are not warranted can result in poor compliance and weakens the authority of traffic control devices.

Q. MUNI buses often do not pull up enough into the bus zone, even if there is nothing blocking it. The rear of the bus then protrudes into the crosswalk. This puts pedestrians at risk. In addition, the elderly often stand at the edge of the bus zone and must walk further to board the bus.

A. Thank you for passing on your observations. We share your concerns for the elderly and for safety. The MTA Service Delivery Division will request the General Bulletin describing procedures regarding pulling into bus zones be reissued.

Q. [husband has been injured by another rider on MUNI]: We are lucky he is alive and that we have health insurance...it is unacceptable that someone's life should be endangered on MUNI and that it go unnoticed. MUNI drivers should be trained in dealing with violence.

A. MUNI considers the potential for violence on MUNI buses to be a very serious issue, and we do all we can to make sure our drivers are well prepared when any incident should occur. All MUNI drivers are trained using the Industry Standard Material i.e., Customer Conflicts and You from NTI, the START program by ERGO Metrics.

Questions relating to Fare/Transfers

Q. Would you be open to just reducing the monthly cost of a Fastpass and create a college pass instead of forcing college presidents to charge a transportation tax on those who walk or bike to college?

A. While there are no plans to reduce the cost of the Fast Pass, a discounted pass for students called a Class Pass is currently used by USF, and we have recently re-initiated discussions with SFState about Class Passes and how we can make them of more interest to the student body.

Q. Is there any way to make it a rule that after 7 PM everyone automatically gets a late night transfer? This would promote MUNI use instead of driving.

A. Any transfer given after 8:30pm is good until 5am. The 7pm time would reduce Muni's fare revenue and is therefore not an option at this time.

Q. Why doesn't San Francisco have Metrocards for public transportation? I'm from New York, and the Metrocard for subways and buses greatly decreases the time it takes to load the bus. It's a simple swipe, and you can buy the card through automated kiosks that are in all subway stations. [They] could be sold at corner stores.

A. Thank you for your suggestion. The MTA is currently working to implement a new type of fare media called TransLink. The TransLink fare payment system allows transit riders to use a single smart card to pay fares on transit systems throughout the Bay Area. A cardholder tags the TransLink card reader's sensor when boarding a bus or light-rail car or entering a train or ferry station. The card reader automatically deducts the correct fare and calculates transfers and appropriate discounts for seniors, youths and persons with disabilities. Cardholders can also add value one time only or automatically with Autoload. The nationwide rollout of TransLink will occur in four stages, and began with Golden Gate Transit and Ferry and AC Transit in October 2006. The MTA's (MUNI) TransLink launch is currently scheduled for late fall/early winter of 2007, and transit riders will be able to use TransLink on every Bay Area transit agency by 2010.

Q. If you took all the money you're spending on [people] to check transfers and spent it on running more trams, our transfers would still be valid by the time they check them. Any thoughts on this?

A. The MTA is currently working on several initiatives to increase both the number of vehicles it has in service as well as increasing boarding times and speed of travel. One such initiative is the adoption of a new fare media called TransLink. The TransLink fare payment system allows transit riders to use a single smart card to pay fares on transit systems throughout the Bay Area. A cardholder tags the TransLink card reader's sensor when boarding a bus or light-rail car or entering a train or ferry station. The card reader automatically deducts the correct fare and calculates transfers and appropriate discounts for seniors, youths and persons with disabilities. The regionwide rollout of TransLink will occur in four stages, and began with Golden Gate Transit and Ferry and AC Transit in October 2006. The MTA's (MUNI) TransLink launch is currently scheduled for late fall/early winter of 2007, and transit riders will be able to use TransLink on every Bay Area transit agency by 2010.

Q. What are some of the changes of moving the fairbox away from the drivers, and having a box in the back of the bus?

A. The MTA is currently working to implement a new fare payment system called TransLink that passengers will be able to use in the back of the bus. A cardholder tags the TransLink card reader's sensor when boarding a bus or light-rail car or entering a train or ferry station. The card reader automatically deducts the correct fare and calculates transfers and appropriate discounts for seniors, youths and persons with disabilities. Cardholders can also add value one time only or automatically with Autoload. The regionwide rollout of TransLink will occur in four stages, and began with Golden Gate Transit and Ferry and AC Transit in October 2006. The MTA's (MUNI) TransLink launch is currently scheduled for late fall/early winter of 2007, and transit riders will be able to use TransLink on every Bay Area transit agency by 2010.

Q. When will MUNI have payment debit cards, like BART has, so exact fare ceases to be an issue? In the meantime, can buying the token booklets be made easier, with more vending locations? It's difficult to get them these days if you don't ride near Powell station downtown.

A. The MTA understands the need for a more convenient method for passengers to pay their fares and is in the process of developing a Request for Proposal that would solicit a contractor to install and service vending machines at the subway stations and other sites. It is anticipated these machines would accept credit cards. The hope is to have a contractor selected by early summer and installation of machines would occur within a short period of time after that. In addition on April 2, 2007 we will be selling MUNI passes via the internet.

Q. Why aren't MUNI passes available at vending machines? (weekly, monthly, daily). Why don't vending machines accept credit and debit cards, such as the NYC Metro? Why don't they place ticket vending machines at congested stops so people can pre-buy tickets? Carl/Cole, Duboce Park, Church/Duboce, 9th/Irving, 19th/Judah.

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Questions relating to Service/Schedules/Cutbacks

Q. What is being done to keep buses on schedule? Why aren't buses showing up on time?

A. The MTA is currently working on several initiatives to address scheduling and on time performance of its vehicles such as efforts to increase the number of vehicles in service and to establish "transit priority" for bus lines. Transit priority would trigger the traffic lights so that the bus would get the green light more often. This would speed up service. With regard to long-term planning, the Transit Effectiveness Project (TEP) which is now underway. The TEP is an 18-month effort by the Controller's Office and the MTA to review the current Muni system and recommend measures to provide service that will attract more riders and be more efficient to operate. The TEP is designed to improve the MTA's ability to respond to current travel needs, provide a blueprint for future service expansion, apply industry best practices to service delivery, and promote the agency's long-term financial stability. Please visit www.sftep.com for more information about the TEP and to provide input and ideas.

Q. Can some stops be eliminated in order to speed up service? Case in point: Funston/Judah.

A. The Transit Effectiveness Project (TEP) is now underway. It is an 18-month effort by the Controller's Office and the MTA to review the current Muni system and recommend measures to provide service that will attract more riders and be more efficient to operate. Stop consolidation will be an important area of study for the TEP.

Q. PLEASE consider Express buses. The system has not changed since I was a kid. We need new, faster routes that can compete with drivers. Trips must take less than 30 minutes--this should be your goal, not "on time. This is a small city, [should be] frequent and fast. Bus riders should never be stuck in traffic. Why can't buses have priority, like police and ambulance?

A. The MTA is working on a number of fronts to implement this suggestion. The MTA is currently working to establish "transit priority" for bus lines. Transit priority would trigger the traffic lights so that the bus would get the green light more often which would speed up service. In regards to long-term planning, the Transit Effectiveness Project (TEP) is now underway. It is an 18-month effort by the Controller's Office and the MTA to review the current Muni system and recommend measures to provide service that will attract more riders and be more efficient to operate. The TEP is designed to improve the the MTA's ability to respond to current travel needs, provide a blueprint for future service expansion, apply industry best practices to service delivery, and promote the agency's long-term financial stability. Please visit www.sftfp.com for more information about the TEP and how to provide input and ideas. Finally, the Transportation Authority is studying Bus Rapid Transit for Geary Boulevard, Van Ness Avenue, and Potrero Avenue. See www.gearybrt.com for a closer look at this proposal.

Q. When will "next bus" be available from all lines?

A. The current schedule is to have all the lines on the NextMUNI website by the end of August2007. To date, all the LRV lines, the F-Line, and three trolley lines(22 Fillmore, 24 Divisadero, and the 33 Stanyan) can be seen online. The remaining trolley lines will be ready for viewing by the end of March and all the diesel lines is scheduled for the end of August. 2) No response yet

Q. The service cuts made last year have been a disaster. How can they be reversed and previous service (still inadequate) restored?

A. The service cuts are not likely to be restored given ongoing budget challenges at the MTA. However, the Transit Effectiveness Project (TEP) is now underway. It is an 18-month effort by the Controller's Office and the MTA to review the current Muni system and recommend measures to provide service that will attract more riders and be more efficient to operate. The TEP is designed to improve the MTA's ability to respond to current travel needs, provide a blueprint for future service expansion, apply industry best practices to service delivery, and promote the agency's long-term financial stability. Please visit www.sftfp.com for more information about the TEP and how to provide input and ideas.

Questions relating to Customer Service

Q. What training is given to MUNI drivers with regard to dealing with the public?

A. MUNI uses trained Certified Instructors as well as a comprehensive training manual re: customer relations and the nationally recognized Smith System five keys to space cushion driving. We also use the Industry Standard Material i.e., Customer Conflicts and You from NTI, the START program by ERGO Metrics.

Q. Why does MUNI not employ highly professional training backed with solid SOP's (standard operating procedures)?

A. MUNI uses trained Certified Instructors as well as solid Standard Operating Procedures in the Rail Divisions along with a comprehensive training manual re: customer relations and the nationally recognized Smith System five keys to space cushion driving. We also use the Industry Standard Material i.e., Customer Conflicts and You from NTI, the START program by ERGO Metrics.

Questions relating to Parking

Q. Sidewalk parking in San Francisco is only enforced by complaint, which force neighbors to squeal on each other. This is one of the reasons enforcement is so lax. Why doesn't the MTA dedicate even one or two officers to sidewalk parking violations? Given the number of vehicles on the city sidewalks, the positions would pay for themselves- and the threat of enforcement would be a strong deterrent.

A. DPT enforces sidewalk parking based on State Law. Due to limited staffing, there are instances when the Enforcement Division is forced to limit their enforcement of sidewalk violations to complaints. As taken from the Enforcement Division's most recent training bulletin, implementation of this law is as follows: There will be a no-tolerance policy for vehicles parked, parallel to the curb, with all four wheels on the sidewalk, or parked in such a manner that there is not adequate space available for wheelchair and baby stroller access. This policy would also apply to vehicles parked perpendicular to the curb, which have jumped the curb. When responding to a sidewalk complaint, all vehicles parked in violation on the sidewalk should be cited.

Q. On Oak from Laguna to Octavia (1 block), parking is allowed on the northern curbside during morning peak hours, creating a bottleneck where 4 lanes of in-bound traffic are forced into 3 lanes. This creates substantial delays for both drivers and MUNI. Why not prohibit morning parking between Laguna and Octavia, bringing that block into line with the rest of the corridor?

A. Thank you for sharing your concerns about parking on Oak from Laguna to Octavia. We are working with Supervisor Mirkarimi's office to address this issue. It is pending Board of Supervisors review, and a committee hearing is to be scheduled on the item.

Questions relating to Greener MUNI/Innovation

Q. 1) I am disappointed that the MTA and DPT are dropping the bike program. Please support these programs as they positively impact transit.2) Why will you not share MUNI info with Google for their public transit website? Portland and 8 other cities now have user friendly transit information online. 511 is not a solution.

A. 1) The Bicycle Program is not being dropped by MTA. MTA is actually increasing funding for the Bicycle Program. Traditionally the Bicycle Program was 100% grant funded, receiving no funds from the City's General Fund. Since the recent court injunction, MTA has committed to fund the equivalent of 3 staff people in the coming fiscal year. 2) Apparently, 511 is considering Google Transit as an option to succeed the current 511 Trip Planner. Additionally, the MTA is currently looking into the possibility of sharing information with Google for its public transit site.

Q. When will bicycles be allowed on MUNI Metro?

A. Due to a Superior Court ruling, the City cannot implement any bicycle projects until additional environmental review is conducted. Allowing bicycles on LRVs was specifically enjoined within the recent court order. MTA anticipates continuing with its pilot project once the required environmental review is completed. Unfortunately, this additional environmental review could take up to 24 months.

Questions relating to ADA/Senior

Q. Can more hand holds be put on metro cars? Most people have nothing to hold onto when the street cars are full. Shorter passengers cannot reach the horizontal bars.

A. SFMTA is assessing the current inventory of hand holds in our fleet and we may elect to add additional handholds on vehicles if warranted. We appreciate your input and will take that into consideration. The handholds were added originally at the request of our senior and disabled passengers.

Q. Not enough room behind shelter for handicapped, wheelchairs, etc. to pass. Does Nathaniel Ford have an "open door policy?"

A. We have specific design requirements that ensure accessibility for bus shelters and sidewalks throughout the city. If an accessible pathway at a certain shelter has been obstructed by newsracks, trashcans, street furniture or debris please let us know the so that we can investigate and rectify any accidental barrier.

Q. 1) Majority of seniors and people with disabilities depend on MUNI as their only means of transportation. 2) there is a movement to reduce the number of bus stops to speed up MUNI. How do you resolve the difference?

A. 1) Muni is in the process of examining our current services through the Transit Effectiveness Project (TEP). This study will help us better address the needs of all San Francisco transit riders. With the data we collect, we will work to balance the competing service needs of "transit-dependent" and "convenience" riders. The Muni Accessibility Advisory Committee (MAAC) has provided input on this project and many others. Through MAAC, the voices of Seniors and people with Disabilities continue to shape the discussions of Muni service planning. MAAC is always looking for people who are passionate about public transit accessibility and wish to play an active role in guiding Muni access policies. For additional information regarding this committee, please call (415) 701-4485 | TTY (415) 701-4730 or visit our website: www.sfmuni.com/maac. 2) This issue of reducing the number of bus stops to speed up service is something that will be addressed by the MTA's Transit Effectiveness Project over the next six months.

Q. Why does MUNI continue to not use the voice announcements for stops?

A. Muni does use the stop announcement system. While there are a few buses that do not have the announcement system, these coaches are being phased out of service. On the coaches that have the announcement system, we do troubleshoot and repair any systems not working. Assistance from the public in identifying coaches with problems is always welcome. Please call in with the coach number, the line, and the direction of service on any buses you notice having problems.

Questions relating to Planning

Q. Are there any plans for an automated system for light changes for buses? Signal dimming

A. The MTA is working to establish "transit priority" for bus lines. Transit priority would trigger the traffic lights so that the bus would get the green light more often. This would speed up service, theoretically affecting passenger loads.

Questions relating to Scheduling/Innovations

Q. Why aren't the info screens installed at all stops for the N-Judah?

A. Currently, there are 10 information screens at select locations on the N-Judah Line. These screens or signs were installed in 1999 and were part of the initial NextBus pilot program. From the pilot program, this has evolved into the current contract. In this contract, NextBus plans to install 400+ signs beginning mid-February and completing by the end of August. We will install the signs by lines beginning with the 22 Fillmore, the initial line on the NextBus website. We will install the info signs in the order the lines were installed.

Q. What are the plans to improve night time and weekend service on the 38?

A. The Union recently worked with the Schedules Division to make major changes in the 38-Geary schedules including adding additional runs to the line. The 38 line the busiest line in San Francisco, and MTA staff continues to work to try and correct the situation. One of the fixes that the MTA is working on is to establish "transit priority" on the 38. Transit priority would trigger the traffic lights so that the bus would get the green light more often. This would speed up service, theoretically affecting passenger loads. A longer term project is to create a mid-Geary bus lane for the 38 limited coaches with the same goal. Some of these ideas are part of a proposed Geary Bus Rapid Transit line, which is being studied by the Transportation Authority in collaboration with the MTA (see www.gearybrt.com for more info).