



Downtown Congestion Pricing Study: Summary of One-on-One Outreach

December 11, 2019

This document represents an initial summary of the project team's one-on-one conversations with folks who could be affected by congestion pricing. We interviewed 25 people and one full-staff team (SOMCAN). The project team is continuing to hold 1:1 conversations throughout December 2019.

In interviews, we covered the following topic areas, reflected in the categories of themes below: (1) Past Outreach and Communications, (2) Who Is Most Sensitive To Changes, (3) Current Downtown Transportation Experience, (4) Current Perspective Around Congestion Pricing, (5) Specific Wants and Ideas, and (6) Existing Priorities.

Within each theme, we provide an overview of common sentiments along with paraphrased quotes from interviewees. Within each theme, we also give a summary of recommendations based on what interviewees said.

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Initial Takeaways

(3) Current Downtown Transportation Experience

Muni and BART are already at capacity

Driving downtown is necessary to get to other districts in SF

Navigating the roads is dangerous and confusing

Traffic impacts quality of life

Public transit options are infeasible in certain areas/for certain people

Initial Takeaways

(4) Current Perspective around Congestion Pricing

Transportation is a wide ecosystem and unaddressed impacts can have far-reaching harmful effects

Positive feelings about congestion pricing

Negative feelings about congestion pricing

Congestion pricing must be done in parallel with increasing public transportation accessibility

Worries of Congestion Pricing areas becoming isolated from the rest of SF

Questions about the implications for TNCs

Initial Takeaways

(5) Wants and Specific Ideas

Flexible criteria for congestion pricing exemptions/discounts

Implement congestion pricing in a way that minimizes impacts on vulnerable communities

Support accessible alternatives to driving a personal car

Apply Congestion Pricing funds directly towards low-income people

(6) Other community concerns and priorities

Creating accessible transportation options outside of driving

Addressing gentrification

Interviews Synthesized in this Document: People connected to the following organizations

The project team prepared this list based on community connections, referrals from other stakeholders and community groups, connections from prior work, and research.

- Anti-eviction attorney, Transit Justice Coalition
- City College of San Francisco
- Community Youth Center of San Francisco (CYCSF)
- District 11 Mobility Justice Committee
- El Centro Bayview - Mission Neighborhood Centers
- Golden Gate Restaurant Association
- Imprint.City
- In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)
- KAIROS Theater Ensemble
- Mayor's Office on Disability
- Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA)
- One Treasure Island
- Pistahan Parade and Festival
- San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR)
- San Francisco Grants for the Arts
- San Francisco Interfaith Council
- San Francisco State University
- SF Transit Riders
- SF Travel
- SOMCAN - South of Market Community Action Network
- St. Francis Homelessness Challenge
- Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation
- Union Square BID
- Wicked Grounds Cafe
- Young Community Developers (YCD)

The project team is in the process of conducting additional interviews. Synthesis from these interviews will be shared at a future date.

Summary of Themes and Findings from Interviews

The big takeaways from our research are:

- Potential cumulative impacts. Interviewees expressed that larger trends and recent government projects have had inequitable impacts that congestion pricing is at risk of exacerbating.
Examples of what interviewees said include:
 - The Mission Street red transit-only lanes limited the ability of Latinx communities to drive into the Mission from the outer districts, interrupting cultural practices and bringing serious economic harm to local businesses
 - Ongoing displacement and destruction of communities persists due to unaffordable housing and other costs, such as public transit fares
 - Many lower-income residents in outer neighborhoods (e.g. Bayview Hunters-Point) are car-reliant, especially longer term residents, due to 1) lack of sufficient transit and 2) specific needs of families with kids, elders, etc. that make some shared mobility options less feasible
 - Treasure Island nonprofit workers and businesses (and probably residents) will be concerned about an additional fee on top of the Treasure Island toll and other bridge tolls
 - San Franciscans with disabilities are reliant on caregivers, who often arrive and leave by car at peak times before going to other jobs
 - Business owners think about indirect costs to vendors, etc
- Lack of trust.
 - Missteps of one government agency reflect negatively on all government agencies in the eyes of the public
 - Lack of coordination translates to lack of clarity
 - Transparency is key
 - Follow-through historically has not been good and is key
- Tentative interest in congestion pricing.
 - Charging fees for driving may be helpful as an alternative to increased transit fares, which are a problem for low income San Francisco residents
 - Folks are interested in ways to decrease collisions in some places where a lower proportion of residents are car reliant
 - Will require improvements to the frequency, safety, and cleanliness of current transit options to accompany any congestion pricing implementation
 - Safety, particularly for evening events or engagements, is seen as an impediment to transit use
- Interest in equitable program design.
 - Directing a significant amount of the funds/benefits to neighborhoods that have been disproportionately harmed historically by our transportation system, e.g. SoMa that bears the brunt of congestion

- Carving out exemptions for car-dependent populations (folks in neighborhoods or populations not adequately served by Muni, e.g. District 10 and disabled folks) who already struggle with affordability
- Prioritizing the voices of those most impacted

Detailed Findings

Italics indicate rough, paraphrased quotes

(1) Concerns about Past Outreach and Communications

This section captures how interviewees and their communities have previously experienced governmental outreach.

Learn from the 14-Mission Rapid (red lanes) project's experience

- The Mission red lanes were "planned on top of communities rather than with them."

Projects with "small" impacts add up

- *Everyone (at city agencies) says their intervention only hurts marginalized folks a little bit and then 17 projects add up and 800 people are displaced because of all of these hits.*

(2) Who Is Most Sensitive to Changes

This section captures interviewees' perspectives on who (individuals and communities) are most sensitive to changes in transportation policy.

Business owners

- *My manager goes out with the car 1-2 times a week to do pickups. They have to have the car here all the time because we don't know when he will need to do these trips. Concerned about the cost of the fee plus parking. We need the car, and without it we would be Ubering.*

Displaced people

- *Anecdotally, people who drive in are so far away from San Francisco due to displacement, they would need to do 7 changes/transfers/stops to get here. This policy would erase the remaining linkage they have.*

Undocumented people

Low-income people

- *Everyone (city agencies) say their intervention only hurts marginalized folks a little bit and then 17 projects add up and 800 people are displaced because of all of these hits.*

Transportation Network Company (TNC, e.g. Uber and Lyft) drivers

Mobility constrained people

Care providers

- *A lot of IHSS recipients (low income disabled folks) are in SoMa, Tenderloin area. Care providers often have multiple recipients meaning they need to travel between clients to serve them. And for many of them, part of their job is to transport people which can require a car.*

Commuters from outside San Francisco

- *Employee travel is a concern, particularly for employees who are unable to use transit. For example, restaurant, bar, and bakery workers whose shifts begin or end outside BART's hours of operation could suffer significant negative impacts – as could businesses that struggle to find and retain staff.*

Residents of Districts 10 and 11

Families

High-schoolers and college students

Some Downtown residents

Nonprofits and volunteers

Regional Residents with Strong Communities in San Francisco

- *The faith community raised concerns about regional residents who come into San Francisco for worship or services.*

Initial Takeaways:

- Design policies that benefit, rather than harm, sensitive groups such as:
 - Businesses - Shop owners in the Mission cite significant harmful effects from the red bus-only lanes. Work with local businesses.
 - Cultural districts - Cultural districts operate like ecosystems— if one goes down, so too can the others since the type of patrons in the area changes. Especially the Leather District.
 - Displaced folks who have already been priced out but need access to community and services.
 - Undocumented folks - at risk of displacement, hard to reach
 - Low income folks outside Downtown (especially Districts 10 and 11) who need to drive in - for their job, to get to cultural areas such as Chinatown or Mission, to receive services, to drop off family members at school.
 - TNCs (eg. Uber and Lyft) - Make sure the fee doesn't trickle down to the driver
 - Families needing to take kids to school and run errands.
 - Seniors and disabled - rely on cars, often low income / on a fixed income. Seniors who rely on driving will have a hard time making changes. Some disabled folks rely heavily on TNCs.
 - Care providers for seniors and disabled folks - making minimum wage, need car to make multiple trips a day.
 - Commuters from outside San Francisco (middle - low income) - Already expensive especially with other tolls.
 - Treasure Island residents
 - Students
 - Nonprofit programs and volunteer-led programs that require frequent shuttling to the downtown area.

(3) Current Downtown Transportation Experience

This section captures interviewees' (and their communities') current experience with transportation in the downtown area.

Muni and BART are already at capacity

Driving downtown is necessary to get to other districts in SF

- *D10 people, especially Latinx and Asian and Pacific Islander (API) folks go to Chinatown and Mission for culturally competent services since there is a lack of culturally competent services in D10— if you drive you'll get impacted.*

Navigating the roads is dangerous and confusing

Traffic impacts quality of life

- *Mostly my issue here (SoMa) is that around 4 o'clock we call it "honk o'clock" because it gets so backed up on the street outside.*

Public transit options are infeasible in certain areas/for certain people

- *It requires bravery for blind and low vision folks to navigate transit services, especially in highly dense areas*

Initial Takeaways:

- Make public transportation more effective and accessible for all groups, particularly disabled folks
- Address overcrowding on transit to make it more usable for all
- Address the issue of having to leave Downtown (and incur a fee) in order to park a car

(4) Current Perspective around Congestion Pricing

This section captures interviewees and their communities perspective around a congestion pricing policy.

Transportation is a wide ecosystem and unaddressed impacts can have far-reaching harmful effects

- *"Assess the potential harmful impacts, along with the benefits, on the low-income residents, people of color, and vulnerable community members in the area, as well as the small businesses, nonprofits, and cultural institutions that comprise much of the cultural ecosystem that maintains the combined stability of the neighborhood for its most vulnerable. Does it add cost? If it does is there an equity program to defer that cost on our low-income neighbors?"*

Positive feelings about congestion pricing

- *Tenderloin community says good things about this kind of policy. So many deaths and injuries in the neighborhood, people talking about the idea of eliminating cars in the Tenderloin.*

Negative feelings about congestion pricing

- *Congestion is negatively impacting them already (e.g. new stadium congestion) and poor people are always punished as others are making a profit. Even though it's a project about addressing congestion, they may see it as the city catering towards a group of people rather than those who really need it.*

Congestion pricing must be done in parallel with increasing public transportation accessibility

Worries of Congestion Pricing areas becoming isolated from the rest of San Francisco

Questions about the implications for TNCs

- *Unless you are going to tackle TNCs, especially out of region TNCs, Congestion Pricing is just a joke.*

Initial Takeaways:

- Identify as many potential harms as possible and build in benefits and protections. Benefits and protections for sensitive groups are needed to ensure congestion pricing reduces inequality rather than further exacerbating it.
- Identify how congestion pricing will affect traffic congestion within the Mission given that some traffic may divert around the boundaries of a congestion pricing zone.
- Think through how to minimize isolation of cultural districts within a congestion pricing zone from the rest of the city (e.g. Filipino and Leather).
- Build in protections or alternative supports for disabled folks who benefit from the accessibility of TNCs and may see ride prices increase or availability reduced.

(5) Wants and Specific Ideas

This section captures the specific desires interviewees have had in regards to a congestion pricing policy.

Flexible criteria for congestion pricing exemptions/discounts

- *The courts provide a good exemption process example. To see if you are eligible for a fee waive at the courthouse you fill out a form that gives you either automatic qualification for the fee waive, or if you are not automatically qualified, it sets you up with a 1-1 meeting with someone to understand your*

case better and see if you are qualified. There is nothing that automatically disqualifies you, only auto qualify.

- *My friend had a car towed. The City had a low income subsidy to help with the fee, but to apply he needed a tax return or CalFresh. When he applied for benefits he didn't need CalFresh at the time, and last year's tax returns don't help because he was employed.*

Implement congestion pricing in a way that minimizes impacts on vulnerable communities

Support accessible alternatives to driving a personal car

Apply Congestion Pricing funds directly towards low-income people

- *I only like how funds are used if it goes directly to the end user. If it went to free Muni passes, then yes I like that idea. Or a system where if I hit a certain point in my usage on my pass, it doesn't charge me anymore as a low income transit rider—this also promotes transit use. Have to indicate you are low income to get this.*

(6) Other community concerns and priorities

This section captures priorities and concerns that interviewees and their communities expressed outside of congestion pricing. These priorities offer insight into what communities care about.

Creating accessible transportation options outside of driving

- Priorities include making transit and TNCs more wheelchair accessible, lower fares on transit, bike education and infrastructure in historically underinvested neighborhoods, creating a pedestrian-centric downtown

Addressing gentrification