



May 24, 2021

Chair Mandelman and Commissioners
San Francisco County Transportation Authority
1455 Market Street, 22nd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94103
info@sfcta.org

Re: Item 12, SFMTA Transportation Recovery Plan

Dear Chair Mandelman and Commissioners,

We are San Francisco's member-supported advocates for affordable, efficient, and always growing public transit. We continue to be concerned about the return of Muni service.

We're very heartened by the return of rail and other service that took place on May 15. We congratulate SFMTA on such a smooth re-launch. We also know ridership is returning faster than expected - people are excited to get back out on Muni! - and we continue to be concerned that service is not returning fast enough or on enough routes.

With so much service still not available, and with buses stuck in ever-worsening car traffic, people are finding other ways to get around. Traffic is back, and it's choking Muni service. We continue to be concerned about a transit death spiral.

The service restoration proposed for August 7 helps address some important gaps - we understand the priority is to improve coverage. However, we'd like to understand some of the decisions around connections and service patterns that are being made. For example, the 23 Monterey could provide an important connection for residents in the south and southeastern part of the city to the recreation and open space resources at San Francisco Zoo and the Great Walkway. Instead, the route is terminating at West Portal. At the same time, the new 57 and 58 routes are falling a few blocks short of making a useful connection to West Portal.

Some of these route decisions continue to be made from a position of scarcity. Muni lacked full staffing well before the pandemic, and the uncertainty of future funding to support ongoing growth makes it difficult to plan. We urge the SFCTA board to work with SFMTA to develop sustainable funding sources so that we can have the robust transit recovery we need.

We also ask SFCTA to find funding for capital improvements to speed up transit service, making it more reliable and more efficient; enabling Muni to serve more riders with the same number of vehicles.

For example, fixing the signals at St. Francis Circle to actually prioritize transit would solve a huge bottleneck for service on the west side - impacting the 23 Monterey, K Ingleside, M



Ocean View, and the 57 Parkmerced. Fixing transit signal priority along the T Third could bring the light rail route closer to delivering on its promise. Runtime data suggest that transit priority improvements along the 23 Monterey route could save the over 10 minutes' travel time; transit priority could also save the 44 O-Shaughnessy and the T Third significant travel time.

These sorts of improvements would increase access and mobility to underserved areas of the city. They would allow Muni to provide more service with existing resources. Muni service would be more useful to more people, so they aren't forced into private vehicles.

Muni showed great resilience in responding to the constraints of the pandemic, redesigning the system practically overnight several times to prioritize essential workers and essential trips. Muni found some key efficiencies by rolling out the Temporary Emergency Transit Lanes, and utilizing headway management. However, Muni does not have the resources to be resilient in returning to the level of service we need as quickly as we need it, as evidenced by the proposed plan. In a city with a transit first policy and a climate emergency declaration, we find this incredibly discouraging.

As to the trade-offs we face, considering the speed of vaccination and re-opening happening in San Francisco, we urge a quick return of evening service and of parallel routes. While we're excited by a 5-minute network, we want to make sure it's not at the expense of sufficient coverage and access. Parallel routes aren't necessarily redundant. They mean access for tens of thousands of riders daily, and they take capacity pressure off the higher-ridership routes that can be unboardable (pass-ups due to crowding happened before the pandemic, after all). Evening service is crucial not only for people to be able to enjoy San Francisco's cultural offerings, but also especially for the people who work in those industries.

We urge the SFCTA to work with SFMTA to prioritize increasing Muni service and making it more efficient. We cannot afford to keep wasting time and money stuck in traffic, risking a full transit death spiral.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Cordes".

Mark Cordes
Executive Director
San Francisco Transit Riders

cc:

Tilly Chang, Executive Director
Jeffrey Tumlin, Director of Transportation
Julie Kirschbaum, Director of Transit