

New Expenditure Plan for San Francisco's Half- Cent Sales Tax for Transportation: Outreach Findings

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San Francisco
County Transportation
Authority

Draft

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1. Introduction

The San Francisco County Transportation Authority (Transportation Authority) has been preparing to ask San Francisco voters in November 2022 to continue the existing half-cent transportation sales tax and approve a new 30-year investment plan, also known as the Expenditure Plan. As with the prior two Expenditure Plans managed by the Transportation Authority, this new Expenditure Plan will determine how the Transportation Authority invests sales tax dollars to improve transportation across the city.

Outreach and engagement is a crucial component of developing a new Expenditure Plan with broad community support and equity at the forefront. The Transportation Authority has drawn on outreach that has been done for other efforts such as ConnectSF and the San Francisco Transportation Plan, as well as conducted outreach specific to the new Expenditure Plan. This Expenditure Plan outreach has particularly targeted low-income communities, communities of color, and monolingual communities across the city, to help advance the Transportation Authority's equity framework. This document outlines outreach activities, provides a synthesis of feedback from community outreach and details how that feedback has been used to inform development of a new Expenditure Plan.

2. Feedback Tools

The project team utilized the following channels to gather feedback:

- Partnered with **8 community-based organizations** serving Equity Priority Communities to conduct in-depth **community interviews**
- Partnered with **3 community-based organizations to hold focus groups**, one each in Spanish, Chinese, and Russian, seeking feedback from monolingual communities that may not typically engage in transportation planning
- Held **2 Town Halls** inviting a broader audience to provide feedback, including an option to view a recording of the town hall and provide feedback via email
- Reached out to **29 community organizations** to spread awareness of outreach events and boost engagement
- Presented to numerous local organizations via **9 roadshow events** to seek feedback from their constituencies
- Hosted an **online survey available in multiple languages** asking about new and ongoing programs, receiving about **400 responses**
- Conducted a review of past outreach to incorporate feedback from previous planning efforts, including community-based transportation plans
- Held **11 virtual Expenditure Plan Advisory Committee Meetings**, open to the public with opportunity for public comment, to help shape the Expenditure Plan

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- Made presentations at **5 Transportation Authority Community Advisory Committee** meetings and **5 Transportation Authority Board** meetings, open to the public with opportunity for public comment (as of February 15, 2022)
 - Coming up: Statistically significant **voter opinion survey** representative of likely voters across the city

3. Summary of Key Findings

OVERALL THEMES

- There are **varied needs** and desires from different communities based in different parts of the city.
- **Improving transit** had broad support, including improvements to reliability, customer experience, better connections, and additional service.
- **Safety and accessibility** were a primary concern for many, including improving pedestrian and bicyclist safety and accessibility for seniors and people with disabilities.
- Putting equity at the forefront, including focusing investment in **Equity Priority Communities** and serving people with low incomes, was critical for many.
- Better **connections between neighborhoods**, especially considering changing pandemic travel patterns, and localized engagement around transportation solutions were emphasized.

4. Limitations of Outreach

Outreach was all virtual due to health orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic and many community-based organizations, particularly those serving disadvantaged populations, were overtaxed from having to address the ongoing challenges of the pandemic for their communities. To help address this, we held a series of in-depth interviews with representatives of community-based organizations serving Equity Priority Communities, held focus groups (in Chinese, Russian, and Spanish), and relied on members of the Expenditure Plan Advisory Committee to bring in their experience and share feedback from the communities they represent.

5. Key Findings from Community Interviews

Staff reached out to 18 community-based organizations and met with eight (8) organizations focused on serving Equity Priority Communities, including the Bayview, Chinatown, and senior populations. These were one-on-one community interviews that

provided background information on the half-cent transportation sales tax and reauthorization process and asked about community priorities. This was one way staff engaged with community-based organizations at a time when they were stretched thin helping their communities navigate and recover from the pandemic. The organizations and feedback are listed below.

5.1 | PARTICIPATING COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

- A. Philip Randolph Institute
- BMAGIC
- Central City Single Room Occupancy Collaborative
- Chinatown Community Development Center
- Portola Neighborhood Association
- San Francisco Human Rights Commission
- Senior and Disability Action
- Southeast Asian Development Center

5.2 | OVERALL THEMES

Theme 1: Invest in transit

- Transit is the highest priority in some communities, especially with transit-dependent populations
- Transit maintenance is important
- There were affordability concerns, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Support for funding paratransit

Theme 1 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Include investments in transit and paratransit

Theme 2: Safety and security

- Concerns about street safety, specifically for pedestrians
- Concerns about personal safety, including on streets and on transit
- Desire to upgrade traffic signals to improve street safety
- Support for making quick-build projects permanent to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety

Theme 2 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Include investments that support safety, including street and personal safety

Theme 3: Equity at the forefront

- Focus investments in low-income neighborhoods
- Provide in-language materials and resources, including maps and transit information
- Concerns about transportation affordability

Theme 3 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Include equity in policies that prioritize funding
- Evaluate policies for inclusion, including multilingual outreach

Theme 4: School transportation solutions are needed

- Lack of yellow school buses makes getting to school difficult
- Additional Muni buses that serve schools are needed

Theme 4 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Consider access to schools as prioritization metric for transit projects

6. Key Findings from Focus Groups

Focus groups were held in Chinese, Spanish, and Russian in partnership with three community-based organizations. They were focused on hearing from monolingual communities that may not typically engage in transportation planning. The focus groups were designed to be small group discussions around three questions:

1. Which ongoing programs are most important to your community,
2. What are your thoughts and feedback on the new program proposals, and
3. What other types of transportation investments would you like to see funded.

Participant information and themes are listed below.

6.1 | PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Community Partner	Total Attendees	Languages Used
Community Youth Center of San Francisco	12	Cantonese
La Raza Community Resource Center	10	Spanish
Russian American Community Services	8	English, Russian

6.2 | OVERALL THEMES

Theme 1: Street safety and accessibility need improvement

- Participants would like safer pedestrian crossings and improved pedestrian access
- Separated bike lanes to improve safety
- Protected left turns were mentioned as a way to improve safety
- Additional traffic signals rather than stop signs, especially near parks and schools and in neighborhoods, as signals may be more respected by drivers

Theme 1 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Include investments in bicycle and pedestrian safety and traffic signals

Theme 2: Transit is critical and improvements are needed

- Participants had concerns about overcrowding on transit
- Those who work non-traditional shifts would like more late night transportation options
- Reliability improvements, including transit-only lanes, are important to speed up buses
- Additional bus connections are needed between neighborhoods, as well as additional buses serving schools
- Transit should be safer, including more lighting at transit stops
- Pedestrian safety related to accessing transit should be improved, in particular pedestrian safety related to center-running buses on Geary Boulevard
- The need for restoration of Muni service was emphasized (amid the COVID-19 pandemic service cuts)

Theme 2 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Include investments that improve transit, including reliability and safety benefits

Theme 3: Equity at the forefront

- Participants would like to invest more in transportation, especially in low-income communities
- Ensure all communities have good access to transportation options
- There were concerns about the affordability of transit. Ideas to improve affordability included transfer tickets and offering free weekend rides for families.

Theme 3 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Put equity at the forefront of the expenditure plan, prioritizing investments in Equity Priority Communities which include concentrations of low-income households

Theme 4: Street resurfacing

- Some participants said that street repaving was essential for all modes
- Potholes present safety concerns and make it difficult for those with disabilities to ride the bus if the ride is too bumpy

Theme 4 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Invest in street resurfacing to improve the transportation experience for all modes

Theme 5: Traffic congestion

- Some participants said they would like to improve the flow of traffic
 - Synchronize traffic signals to improve flow for vehicles and transit
 - Invest in transportation where new housing is being built to reduce congestion
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- Concerns about congestion getting on and off the Bay Bridge

Theme 5 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Invest in traffic signals to support transportation citywide
- Invest in transportation in areas of housing growth

Theme 6: Street closures and parking

- There were concerns about street closures (slow streets) increasing congestion on other nearby streets, leading to unsafe driving, and reducing available parking
- Parking solutions mentioned include an app to find shared parking, stacked parking, and additional parking garages

Theme 6 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Consider all modes when crafting the Expenditure Plan
- Invest in Transportation Demand Management programs that can help manage parking demand

7. Key Findings from Virtual Town Halls

Two virtual town halls were held to seek feedback from anyone interested in the draft Expenditure Plan investments. The town halls were advertised via community-based organizations, Transportation Authority Board members, and social media. One was held on a Tuesday evening and one on a Thursday evening to accommodate differing schedules. We also recorded a town hall and posted it online along with an option to provide feedback via email. Town Hall participant information and themes are listed below.

7.1 | PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Community Partners	Total Attendees	Languages Used
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian Women’s Resource Center • Gum Moon Residence Hall • Richmond Neighborhood Center • One Richmond • SF Council of District Merchants • Sunset Neighborhood Beacon Center • Wah Mei School • We Are OMI • WISE Health 	37	Cantonese, English

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	30	English
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7.2 | OVERALL THEMES

Theme 1: Invest in Muni

- Improvements to bus stops, including accessibility, lighting, loading, signage and amenities
- Reliability improvements are important
- Participants would like additional service
- Prioritize street paving on streets with Muni routes

Theme 1 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Include Muni investments in the Expenditure Plan, including funding for bus stop improvements

Theme 2: Focus on neighborhoods

- Support for neighborhood-scale planning focused on localized transportation barriers and solutions
- Connection to land use, including mixed use neighborhoods and accommodating growth
- Support for transit in neighborhoods, including loop shuttles

Theme 2 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Include investments in neighborhood-scale planning
- Include funding for transportation that supports new development

Theme 3: Slow Streets

- There was both strong support and opposition to slow streets, including support for moving away from car-centric streets and opposition to streets being closed to vehicles
- Desire for traffic calming, safety improvements, and shared roadways rather than closing streets to vehicle traffic
- Some sentiment that tax dollars are being used on street paving but not everyone has access to a street if they're driving and it's closed to cars

Theme 3 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Include flexibility in the Expenditure Plan to accommodate new transportation concepts, such as slow streets, and the need to evaluate and iterate on them
- Include eligibility for pilot projects to help with this

Theme 4: Pedestrian and bicycle facilities

- Interest in protected bike lanes and additional bike parking
- Sidewalk widening is needed in some areas with heavy pedestrian traffic
- Bikeshare/scootershare hubs that serve neighborhoods had support
- Prioritize street paving on streets that have bicycle facilities

Theme 4 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Include investments in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and amenities that support walking and biking

- Include flexible eligibility for emerging concepts such as bikeshare/scootershare hubs

Theme 5: Equity at the forefront

- Participants urged consideration of social justice and climate goals in investments
- Modal equity was mentioned as well, including more space for people walking, biking, and taking transit related to space available for cars
- Some participants were interested in fare-free Muni
- Some participants emphasized the importance of funding paratransit

Theme 5 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Invest in programs that promote equity
- Consider both social and geographic equity in prioritizing investments

Theme 6: Traffic congestion

- There were concerns about traffic congestion for those who drive
- Participants expressed a need to improve the transportation system in areas experiencing residential growth
- Support for traffic management, including signal synchronization to benefit both Muni and cars

Theme 6 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Include funding for transportation that supports new development
- Include investments in signal upgrades

8. Key Findings from Roadshow Presentations

Project staff offered to attend existing community meetings in order to reach people where they already are and seek feedback on the draft Expenditure Plan. Organizations and committees invited staff to present on the half-cent transportation sales tax, answer questions, and get feedback from their membership. Participating organizations and themes are listed below.

8.1 | PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

- Potrero Boosters
- Resilient District 10
- San Francisco Bicycle Coalition
- San Francisco Black Led Organizations
- San Francisco Transit Riders
- SFCTA's Business and Labor Roundtables*
- SFMTA's Paratransit Coordinating Council
- Tenderloin Traffic Safety Task Force

Coalition

*Attendees included representatives from: IW 378; Teamsters; Ironworkers Local; Transport Workers Union of America; Fisherman's Wharf CBD; McKinsey; Mission Bay TMA; Business Council on Climate Change; Salesforce

8.2 | OVERALL THEMES

Theme 1: Bicycle and pedestrian safety

- Participants would like protected bike lanes, especially to increase comfort in letting children ride to school
- Secure bike parking
- Support for quick build projects and bike infrastructure being installed throughout the city
- Desire for upgraded traffic signals, including pedestrian scrambles
- Concern about pedestrian safety where freeways meet city streets
- Concern about right-turning vehicles colliding with bikes at intersections

Theme 1 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Invest in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, including signal upgrades

Theme 2: Transit investments

- Improve reliability, accessibility, personal safety and cleanliness of the transit system (local and regional)
- Improve transit access to parks and other amenities
- Invest in new buses, including electric vehicles and infrastructure needed to support them
- Install transit signal priority with upgraded signals
- Need to restore transit service (service cuts during pandemic), pay good wages to attract and retain drivers, mechanics, etc.

Theme 2 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Invest in transit, including buses and electrification infrastructure and signal infrastructure that supports transit reliability

Theme 3: Equity at the forefront

- Equity should be at the root of a new expenditure plan
- Focus investments in Equity Priority Communities
- Recruit transportation employees with equity in mind, including in leadership and management positions, and create opportunities and scholarships for young people or those reentering the workforce
- Consider safety and affordability of freeway travel for people that have been displaced from the city and may not feel safe on transit or have transit options available

Theme 3 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Include Equity Priority Communities as a mechanism for prioritizing investments
- Consider all modes in the Expenditure Plan

Theme 4: Better connect neighborhoods

- Focus on travel between neighborhoods rather than downtown because travel patterns are changing

Theme 4 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Include investments that support neighborhood travel

Theme 5: Paratransit and accessibility

- Participants expressed support for funding paratransit
- Expressed need to improve accessibility, including bus stop locations for seniors and people with disabilities
- Interest in funding to repair paratransit equipment, buy replacement and/or additional vehicles, and expand service

Theme 5 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Include investments in paratransit, including vehicle maintenance and replacement, and accessibility improvements

Theme 6: Innovative enforcement strategies

- Some participants would like funding for enforcement, specifically of cars blocking bike lanes, and photo enforcement using red light and speed cameras
- Desire for innovative enforcement strategies that are equitable
- Signage is not enough for enforcement

Theme 6 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Consider flexible eligibility that would allow exploration of compliance strategies related to improving safety and promoting equity

Theme 7: School transportation

- Participants said it was difficult getting kids to school and there was a lack of school buses
- Biking to school would be more of an option if there were more protected bike lanes and ways to store bikes in apartments

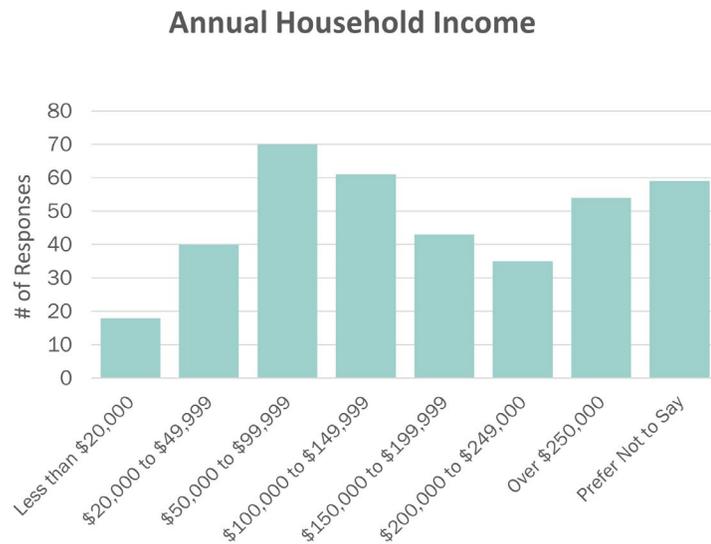
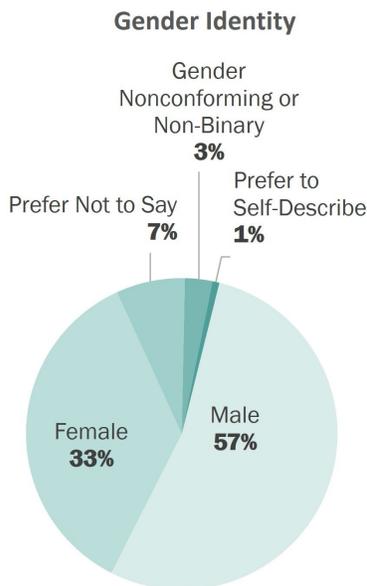
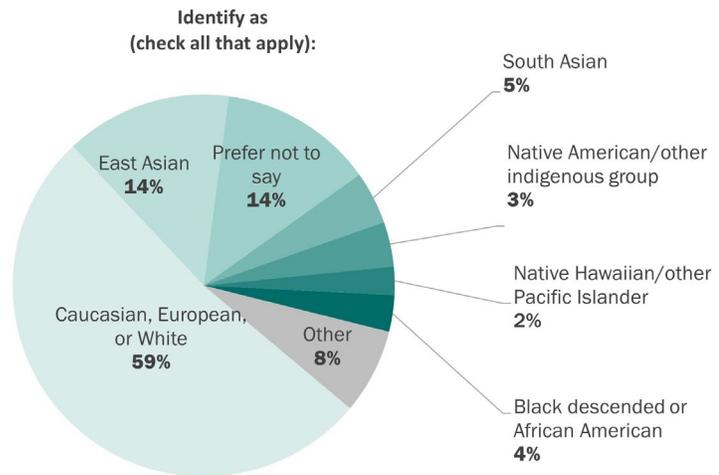
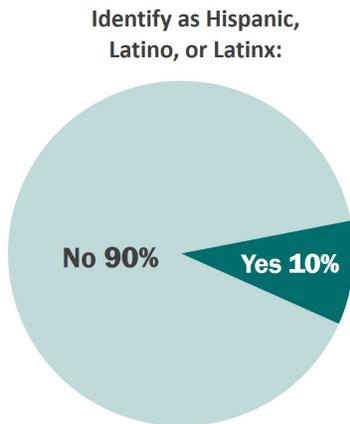
Theme 7 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Invest in bicycle safety improvements
 - Consider school travel, such as Safe Routes to School programs, when developing program investments
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9. Key Findings from Online Survey

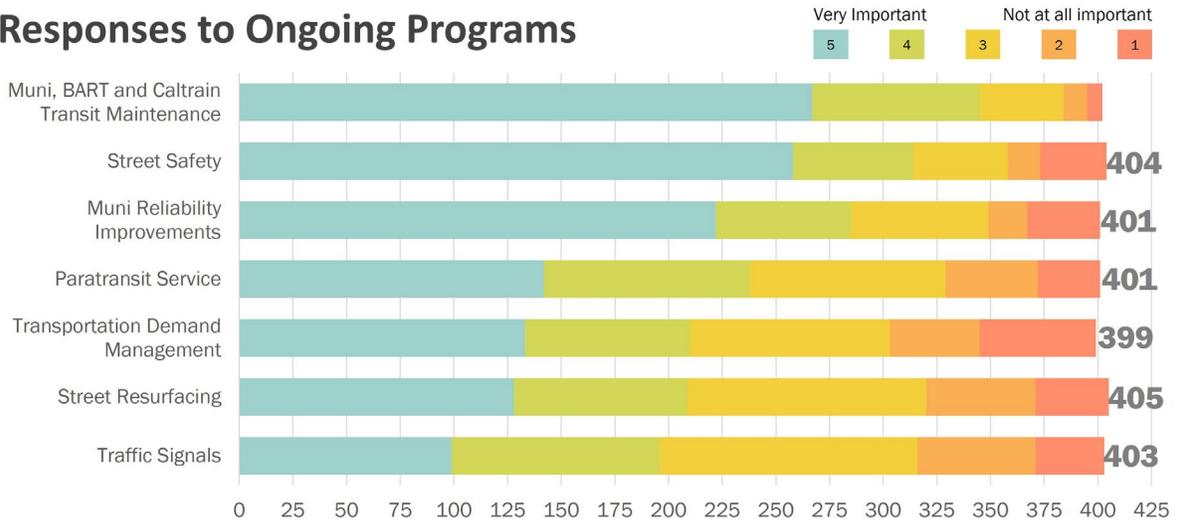
An online survey was available in multiple languages from late September 2021 to early February 2022 and received about 400 responses. The survey provided information on the half-cent transportation sales tax as well as ongoing programs and new programs and asked participants how important (rank 1-5) these programs were to them. There were also opportunities for open-ended responses to ongoing and new programs. The survey also collected voluntary demographic data to determine if respondents were representative of San Francisco overall. Survey respondents differed from San Francisco's population, skewing more white and male. The project team focused much of the outreach strategy on partnering with community-based organizations on outreach formats that allowed for more in-depth feedback from low-income communities of color to ensure the process included thorough feedback from historically underinvested communities. Survey and demographic data are shown below.

9.1 | PARTICIPANT INFORMATION



9.2 | ONGOING PROGRAMS

Responses to Ongoing Programs

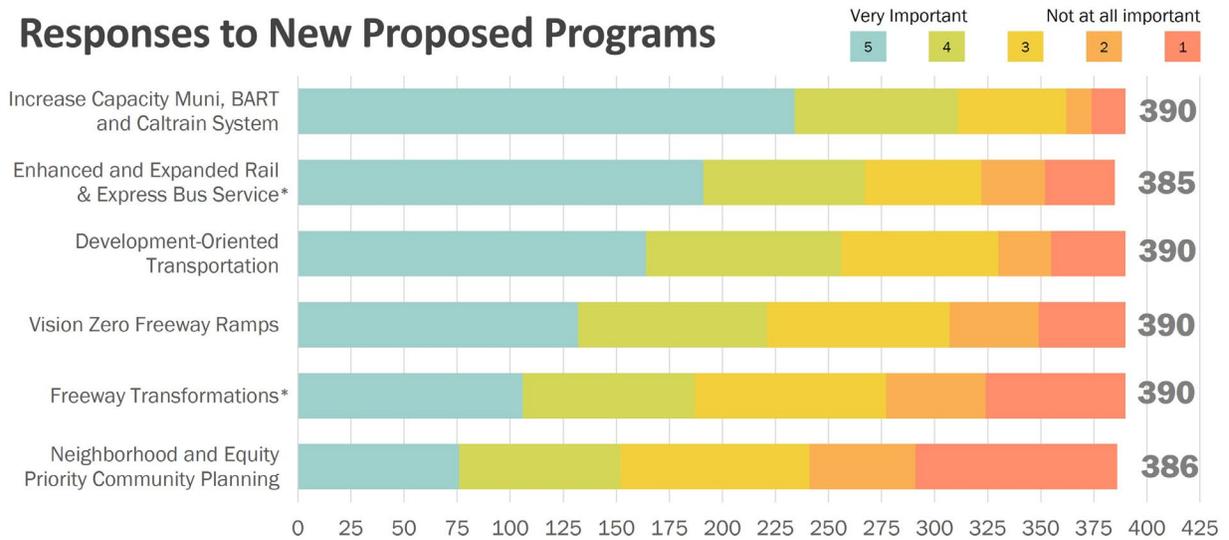


Take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Continue investing in ongoing programs, especially transit maintenance, street safety, and Muni reliability improvements.

9.3 | NEW PROGRAMS

Responses to New Proposed Programs



*Planning/design funds only

Take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Invest in transit capacity improvements, enhanced and expanded transit service, and transportation improvements that support new growth

9.4 | OVERALL THEMES FROM OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES

Theme 1: Transit improvements

- Expand bus and rail throughout the city
- Muni reliability improvements are critical
- Better integrate transit connections and transfers
- Address deliverability of major transit projects

Theme 1 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Include investments in transit, including reliability and expansion
- Consider reporting mechanism for major transit projects

Theme 2: Safety and security

- Support for bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements, especially separated bike lanes
- Support for traffic calming improvements to slow down cars and improve safety
- Concerns about personal safety on transit and waiting at transit stops

Theme 2 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Include investments that support safety, including street and personal safety

Theme 3: Slow streets

- There was some strong support for slow streets, including a permanent network around the city
- There was also opposition to slow streets, with a desire to open all streets to vehicles

Theme 3 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Consider all modes when crafting the Expenditure Plan

Theme 4: Enforcement

- Some participants expressed a desire for traffic enforcement and wanted automated enforcement, including speed cameras and red light cameras
- There was also interest in parking enforcement, especially cars double-parking in bike lanes

Theme 4 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Consider flexible eligibility that would allow exploration of innovative enforcement strategies related to improving safety and promoting equity

Theme 5: Parking and traffic congestion

- Some respondents had concerns about parking removal and would like parking preserved and additional parking made available in areas throughout the city
- Support for traffic signal synchronization to improve traffic flow

Theme 5 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Consider all modes when crafting the Expenditure Plan
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- Invest in traffic signal upgrades
 - Invest in Transportation Demand Management programs that can help manage parking demand

Theme 6: Equity

- Some respondents expressed a desire to tear down freeways and reconnect communities to advance equity
- Concerns about transit affordability and a desire for free transit and/or capped fares across transit systems
- Support for paratransit and essential trip cards serving seniors and people with disabilities

Theme 6 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Include program eligibility for transformative freeway projects
- Invest in paratransit to serve seniors and people with disabilities
- Consider equity in prioritizing investments

10. Key Findings from Review of Past Outreach

At the beginning of the reauthorization process, staff reviewed outreach findings from various other plans including ConnectSF, the San Francisco Transportation Plan, Downtown Congestion Pricing, and various community-based transportation plans. These findings provided an opportunity for staff to learn from prior efforts and helped to shape the outreach strategy for reauthorization. Many of the themes from past outreach, listed below, are similar to feedback themes heard throughout the reauthorization outreach phase.

10.1 | PLANS AND STUDIES REVIEWED

- ConnectSF: Vision and Part 2 Outreach Reports
- San Francisco Transportation Plan
- Downtown Congestion Pricing: Outreach Round 1
- Freeway Corridor Management Study
- Freeway Ramp Intersection Safety Studies 1 & 2
- Various community-based transportation plans

10.2 | OVERALL THEMES

Theme 1: Transit needs improvement

- Transit is often slow, unreliable, and infrequent with too many transfers
 - Increase transit service, including more frequent service and longer vehicles
 - Improve bus stops with amenities
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- Expand the transit network
 - Free or reduced transit fares
 - Better transit connections

Theme 1 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Include investments in improving transit, including reliability and expansion

Theme 2: Safety and security are a concern

- Safety and security are a primary concern for many
- Improve pedestrian safety, including crosswalks and lighting
- Improve bicycle safety with infrastructure improvements

Theme 2 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Include investments that improve bicycle and pedestrian safety

Theme 3: Equity at the forefront

- Think about who benefits from investments and who has been harmed from previous transportation investments
- Design programs with equity at the forefront

Theme 3 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Prioritize equity when making investment decisions
- Consider how to repair past harms from transportation projects with new investments

Theme 4: Parking and loading are a neighborhood concern

- Balance street improvements with need for parking
- Loading space is needed

Theme 4 take-aways for Expenditure Plan design

- Consider all modes of transportation

11. Expenditure Plan Advisory Committee

Development of the new Expenditure Plan has also been informed by an Expenditure Plan Advisory Committee (EPAC). The goal of the EPAC is to help shape the new Expenditure Plan and ultimately, recommend that the Transportation Authority Board approve the new Expenditure Plan and place it on the ballot. The EPAC provides an opportunity to engage stakeholders deeply in the development of a new Expenditure Plan. The 27 member EPAC represents a broad coalition of interests, including:

- 13 equity and neighborhood-focused representatives
- 8 advocacy organizations
- 6 business and civic group representatives

The EPAC has been meeting approximately bi-monthly from September to February (final meeting anticipated February 24, 2022) and meetings are open to the public, with public comment taken at each meeting. For more information on the EPAC, please visit sfcta.org/expenditureplan.

Acknowledgements

This outreach summary is part of the San Francisco County Transportation Authority's development of a new Expenditure Plan for the existing half-cent sales tax for transportation. For more information about the new Expenditure Plan, please visit sfcta.org/expenditureplan.

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