

PRESS RELEASE

SFCTA Releases “TNCs Today” Report, Highlighting Uber, Lyft Activity in San Francisco

Report provides first comprehensive estimate of the volume, frequency and coverage of ride-hailing trips in San Francisco

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Plan, Fund, Deliver

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – The San Francisco County Transportation Authority has released “TNCs Today: A Profile of San Francisco Transportation Network Company Activity.” The draft report is the first comprehensive estimate of the volume, frequency and coverage of ride-hailing trips by Uber and Lyft in San Francisco.

Agency staff will present the report during today’s Transportation Authority Board meeting at 10 a.m., Room 250, City Hall.

Key findings of the report, which focused only on Transportation Network Company trips made entirely within San Francisco, include:

- On a typical weekday, TNCs make more than 170,000 vehicle trips within San Francisco, approximately 12 times the number of taxi trips, representing 15% of all intra-San Francisco vehicle trips.
- TNC trips are concentrated in the densest and most congested parts of San Francisco, including the downtown and northeastern core of the city. At peak periods, TNCs are estimated to comprise 20–26% of vehicle trips in Downtown areas and the South of Market. At the other end of the range, TNCs comprise 2%–4% of peak vehicle trips in the southern and western part of the city.
- On an average weekday, more than 5,700 TNC vehicles operate on San Francisco streets during the peak period. On Fridays, over 6,500 TNC vehicles are on the street at the peak.
- TNCs drive approximately 570,000 vehicle miles within San Francisco on a typical weekday. This accounts for 20% of all local daily vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and includes both in-service and out-of-service mileage. Taken over total weekday VMT, which includes regional trips, local TNC trips account for an estimated 6.5% of total weekday vehicle miles traveled.
- TNCs provide broader geographic coverage than taxis, though there appear to be lower levels of both types of trips in the south and southeast part of the city.

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Report’s purpose

The purpose of the “TNCs Today” report is to provide information on TNC activity in San Francisco to help the Transportation Authority fulfill its role as the county Congestion Management Agency for San Francisco. The report is also intended to inform the Transportation Authority Board (comprised of the 11 members of the Board of Supervisors) as well as policymakers in other arenas and the public, on the size, location and time-of-day characteristics of San Francisco’s TNC activity. Finally, the report can serve as the foundation of future research on San Francisco TNC activity and impacts.

Transportation Network Companies Uber and Lyft are an increasingly visible presence on San Francisco streets. But until now there has been no comprehensive data to help the public and policy-makers understand the extent of their activities and assess the need to manage them.

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) regulates TNCs and requires reporting by both companies. However, to date, both the CPUC and TNC companies have declined to share citywide trip data with San Francisco.

“The data in this report confirms the widespread public perception that Transportation Network Companies comprise a significant share of traffic on our city streets,” said Aaron Peskin, Chair of the San Francisco County Transportation Authority and District 3 Supervisor. “As a Transit First City, we have to evaluate the impact these gig economy vehicles are having on our public transit and our already congested streets. My Board and I will be working to ensure our public transit, cycling and pedestrian safety infrastructure is prioritized above private interests.”

While TNCs comprise 15% of average weekday vehicle trips, this number climbs as high as 26% in peak periods in the downtown core, where congestion is greatest. The Transportation Authority’s 2013 countywide plan documented and anticipated the exacerbation of congestion in this area through its South of Market (SoMa) Core Circulation Study, which highlighted the importance of prioritizing transit, cycling and walking, as well as transportation demand management measures, as key strategies to keep the area accessible.

District 6 Supervisor Jane Kim represents the Tenderloin/South of Market area and noted the importance of the Transportation Authority’s findings: “The residents and businesses in my district feel the effects of TNCs on our neighborhood every day. Increased traffic is just one symptom of the high volume of TNCs and I am also concerned about the quality of life and safety of our streets. This research is very helpful to our efforts to make sure state and local policy is keeping up with the rapid growth of TNCs in San Francisco so that the sharing economy doesn’t become a burden on our residents.”

Tilly Chang, Executive Director of the San Francisco County Transportation Authority, said: “We are at an important time, when many cities are shaping policies to respond to a host of new mobility options. This is best done with the benefit of data-driven analyses to evaluate the impact of each new service on the goals we have set for a healthy city. Our research on TNCs in San Francisco can now serve as a strong foundation for further study and informed action.”

Joe Castiglione, Deputy Director for Technology, Data and Analysis, who authored the report, said: “I want to thank our partners at Northeastern University for their pioneering work and for helping us to better understand ride-hailing activity in San Francisco. We welcome further research collaborations on this and other topics with interested parties from government, industry and academia.”

Methodology and timeframe

The information in “TNCs Today” is a profile of estimated TNC usage from six weeks in late 2016. Data for the report was collected from the Uber and Lyft application programming interfaces by researchers at

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Northeastern University. The Transportation Authority’s data team cleaned and analyzed the raw data for presentation in the report.

“Ride-hailing services are changing the face of transportation in cities across the globe,” said Assistant Professor Christo Wilson and Associate Professor Alan Mislove, both of Northeastern University. “Given the growing prominence of services like Uber and Lyft, we feel that it is critical that the public and regulators have the data they need to understand these services, and the impact they have. We are thrilled to be collaborating with the SFCTA to measure ride-hailing services. By combining the datasets and expertise from Northeastern and the SFCTA, we are able to quantify the dynamics of transportation services in San Francisco in ways that simply have never been done before. We hope this serves as a model for other cities that are struggling to craft data-driven, effective policies around transportation services.”

What’s next?

Subsequent reports will address important analytic and policy questions regarding TNC activity in San Francisco. These future studies will assess TNC policies, best practices, and a range of topics that reflect citywide goals including: safety, transit ridership and performance, congestion and air quality, disabled access and equity, and land use and curb management.

Resources

Go to www.sfcta.org/TNCsToday for:

- Downloadable copy of “TNCs Today: A Profile of San Francisco Transportation Network Company Activity”
- Downloadable data file of TNC pick up/drop off by Travel Analysis Zone

Backgrounder on which agencies do what

Several governmental entities are involved in the planning, design, funding and regulation of San Francisco streets. They include:

- San Francisco County Transportation Authority: Funds a wide range of transportation improvements and serves as the county Congestion Management Agency for San Francisco.
- San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency: Manages city streets, including parking and curb access; operates transit and regulates taxis.
- California Public Utilities Commission: Regulates Transportation Network Companies in San Francisco and statewide.
- Caltrans: Owns some streets in San Francisco that are part of the statewide highway system, such as Van Ness Avenue and 19th Avenue/Park Presidio Boulevard.

About the San Francisco County Transportation Authority (www.sfcta.org)

Created in 1989, the Transportation Authority spearheads strategic planning and allocates funding for transportation-related projects in San Francisco. The Transportation Authority administers the city’s Prop. K half-cent transportation sales tax, the Prop AA \$10 annual vehicle registration fee program and the Transportation Fund for Clean Air. The Transportation Authority also serves as San Francisco’s Congestion Management Agency and is the Treasure Island Mobility Management Agency. The Transportation Authority Board consists of the 11 members of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, who act as Transportation Authority Commissioners. Commissioner Aaron Peskin is Chair of the Board. Tilly Chang is the Transportation Authority’s Executive Director.

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