

Restoring Transportation Balance in San Francisco

With 79% of San Francisco households owning or leasing an automobile and nearly 50% of San Franciscans who work outside of their homes driving or carpooling to work, it is time for the Mayor, the Supervisors, and the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) Board to restore a balanced transportation policy for all San Franciscans.

Balanced transportation policies would better serve San Francisco motorists, pedestrians, first responders, taxi riders, Muni riders, and bicyclists, and address the unique needs of the disabled, seniors, and families with children.

The Board of Supervisors created a Transit First policy in 1973. In 1999, the SFMTA was created. Its unelected board was granted exclusive authority to dictate the City's transportation policies. Since then, the Transit First policy has morphed into one that favors only public transportation and bicycles, to the exclusion of any other mode of transportation. Nevertheless, a majority of San Franciscans want the automobile option for its convenience, personal safety, and freedom of movement.

The City has eliminated thousands of off-street and on-street parking spaces through new construction and the creation of new bike lanes. The City also removed the requirement that one parking space be created for each new residential unit constructed. To make matters worse, the SFMTA has not constructed a single new parking garage since the 1990s. These out-of-balance policies have contributed to a severe shortage of parking spaces in the City.

By eliminating traffic lanes, the City has increased travel times for motorists, Muni riders, and first responders alike. This has contributed to greater congestion on our streets, thereby increasing greenhouse-gas emissions.

The City has substantially increased parking garage fees, meter rates, parking ticket fines, and the costs of residential parking permits, while expanding the days and times when meters are enforced. Today, motorists pay a greater share of the SFMTA's budget than do Muni riders.

Motorists' share of funding the SFMTA will continue to rise if the vehicle license fee is tripled, as proposed; parking meters are expanded into residential neighborhoods; and the City follows through on its plans to introduce variable meter pricing to every neighborhood of San Francisco.

Text of Policy

It shall be the policy of the City and County of San Francisco that:

1. Parking meters should not operate on any City and County holiday listed on sfgov.org, on Sundays, or outside the hours of 9:00am to 6:00 p.m. Commencing July 1, 2015, fees for parking garages, meters, parking tickets, and neighborhood parking permits should be frozen for five years, allowing the City to annually adjust thereafter only for Consumer Price Index (CPI) increases.
2. The introduction of parking meters or variable meter pricing into neighborhoods where they currently do not exist should be allowed only upon petition by the majority of the affected households and merchants.
3. A portion of any additional parking or motorists' fees and new bond monies earmarked for the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) should go to the construction and operation of neighborhood parking garages.
4. Any proposed re-engineering of traffic flows in the City should aim to achieve safer, smoother-flowing streets.
5. Traffic laws should be enforced equally for everyone using San Francisco's streets and sidewalks.
6. The seven-member SFMTA Board should include not only four regular riders of Muni, but a fair representation of all transportation stakeholders, including motorists. The SFMTA should create a Motorists' Citizens Advisory Committee in addition to its other advisory committees.
7. The Board of Supervisors shall make every reasonable effort to implement the components of this policy through appropriate legislative and administrative acts, including but not limited to acts relating to enacting, repealing, reconciling, amending, and/or ameliorating the components of this policy with other existing laws, regulations, and policies of the City & County of San Francisco, as well as seeking, encouraging, lobbying for, and promoting appropriate changes in the laws, regulations, and policies of other jurisdictions that may conflict with implementation of the components of this policy.