

The background image shows a subway station. A train is stopped at a platform. The train's destination sign reads "THIRD STREET SUNNYDALE". The train number "1482B" is visible. The train has the "MUNI" logo on the front. A sign on the front of the train says "MOTORISTS MUST STOP FOR PEDESTRIANS". Several passengers are standing on the platform. The station has a concrete ceiling and walls.

Building an equitable and accountable transit system for all San Franciscans

Transit Justice Coalition
March 2024

Contents

Introduction	3
The Transit Justice Coalition	3
Mission Statement and Vision	3
What is this report?	4
Why this report?	4
Grounding in Transit Equity	5
Part 1: What We Need	6
Service	6
Affordability	8
Safety	9
Access and Accessibility	11
Part 2: How We Get There	12
Planning and Decision-making	12
Workforce and Agency Capacity	14
Funding	16
Conclusion	20
Sources & Special Thanks	21

Introduction

The Transit Justice Coalition

The Transit Justice Coalition (TJC) comprises organizations from all across San Francisco who understand that a thriving public transit system is a bedrock for equity in our city and that in order to create a thriving public transit system, it needs to be built with equity top-of-mind. The coalition, convened by San Francisco Transit Riders (SFTR), has been meeting since September 2022 to articulate a vision for San Francisco public transit that prioritizes the needs of transit riders who have historically been excluded from decisions around transportation and urban planning. Our coalition includes (but is not limited to) transit riders, disability advocates, climate advocates, members of labor unions, community groups, and affordable housing providers.

Mission Statement and Vision

The Transit Justice Coalition brings together transit riders, community organizations, advocates, and labor to shape, advance, and fund an equitable and growing transit system in San Francisco.

We envision a transit system where everyone – regardless of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, and ability – can enjoy accessible transit options that reliably, affordably, and conveniently get us where we need to go in San Francisco and connect us to work, school and play throughout the region.

San Franciscans want and deserve an accountable transit system that serves all of the city's residents and visitors while prioritizing the most transit-dependent riders and marginalized communities. Investing in such a system will enhance our freedom of movement, create good-paying green union jobs, and help our city fight climate change by encouraging fewer trips made in private vehicles, which currently account for about half of San Francisco's total greenhouse gas emissions.

We recognize that transit only works well when walking, cycling, and rolling are safe, comfortable, and convenient, and where streets, sidewalks, and transit stops and stations are safe and accessible.

To meet the above goals, public transit must be sufficiently, reliably, and equitably funded, so it can grow to become the mode of choice for all travelers, whenever and wherever they want to go, without placing an unfair financial burden on lower-income San Franciscans.

What is this report?

As the conveners of the TJC, SFTR has created this report to demonstrate what a thriving, equitable transportation system could look like in San Francisco, and to highlight the changes that are needed to create such a system. In creating this report, we conducted multiple rounds of outreach with TJC members and other stakeholders to understand their needs and concerns related to public transportation. This report is the result of that outreach – a document that lifts the most troubling problems identified by our partners and the most compelling solutions to those problems.



Why this report?

To achieve the vision of an equitable and growing transit system, Bay Area public transit needs stable and sustainable funding sources for transit operations and strategic capital investment. While some of this funding may come from regional, state, and federal sources, we cannot simply hope that San Francisco’s transit system will be adequately funded by these higher divisions of government.

Residents and communities in San Francisco need to decide the best methods to fund transit from local sources, as well as determine what an accountable transit system looks like. State and local leaders often cite the need for greater accountability from transit agencies before being comfortable allocating them additional funding.

The goal of this report is to create a clear framework for what “accountability” means for the riders and communities that rely on public transit every day. In doing so, we hope to lay the groundwork for the new, sustainable, and equitable funding sources that will be necessary to ensure that our local transit agencies improve and remain accountable to riders.

In June 2023, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) projected a growing deficit of funds to operate transit service (the operating budget) with a hole of \$101 million starting in calendar year 2024 and the need to generate \$272 million a year starting in 2027-2028. While some of that deficit has in the meantime been filled with state and regional money following the passage of [SB 125](#), that funding is in jeopardy as the State of California plans to implement budget cuts to address its own [record budget deficit](#).

SFMTA also has a projected need for over \$9 billion in funds for repairs and improvements (the capital budget) over the next 10 years.

Transit riders and supporters are the natural leaders for passing a new transit funding measure. Our voices also need to be leading the conversation about the transit service and the policies that shape it. We know that creating the transit system that San Francisco needs will take time, so this document is organized to provide our vision, specific aspects of transit that aren't working now, and incremental solutions to achieve the vision.

The document is divided into two parts. Part 1 is about what transit service is needed, how people access transit, and ensuring transit is safe and affordable. Part 2 focuses on how transit decisions are made, how we support the transit workforce, and our recommendations for local transit funding.

Grounding in Transit Equity

The Transit Justice Coalition believes in the need for equity in both process and outcomes, so we consider equity in each section of this document. San Francisco has a long history of transportation policy decisions that have harmed low-income, Black, and brown communities and denied them access to high-quality transit service. There has also been a lack of prioritization of the changes needed to make sure transit service is fully accessible to people with disabilities.

We have to repair these harms and prioritize the transportation needs of these communities while increasing transit access across the entire city. Communities should not be pitted against each other to get the transit service they need.

Part I: What We Need

Service

TJC Principle

Restore, Stabilize, and Expand Service: The coalition supports the restoration of pre-pandemic service levels, and continued investment to expand service, improve reliability, and increase ridership. We recognize that the pre-pandemic system was insufficient and that simply restoring pre-pandemic service exactly as it was will not create a more equitable transit system or address the current transit needs of riders. Service should be restored based on demand focused on existing routes that face crowding and new routes that create new connections between underserved neighborhoods.

The Vision

We envision a transit system where everyone – regardless of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, and ability – can access transit options that safely, reliably, affordably, and conveniently get us where we need to go in San Francisco. The system should be integrated with other transit and active transportation infrastructure to connect us to work, school, and play throughout the region.

Public transit service in San Francisco should be:

Complete: Connect every neighborhood in the city with frequent rapid service that runs end to end in 30 minutes or less with easy transfers, and with direct access to regional transit services.

Frequent: Service should be every 15 minutes at the minimum, 5 minutes or less on core lines at busy times.

Rapid: On-street service should not be stuck in traffic and should have priority above cars at signals and stops, and service should not be slowed by infrastructure problems.

24-Hours: Service should be available throughout the city at all times of day.

Reliable: Riders should be able to rely on service to arrive within 3 minutes of when it is scheduled. Real-time and delay information should be timely, accurate, and accessible.

Comfortable: Service should not be crowded. More service should be added at the next service scheduling period if there is consistent crowding on a route.

Multimodal: It should be easy to use more than one mode per trip. This includes other transit agencies, walking, biking, skateboarding, scootering, and other active transportation modes. It should be convenient for travelers to transition from one mode to another.

What's not working

- Neighborhoods outside of Downtown, especially in the Southeast, West Side, and Treasure Island, are hard to reach by transit or have limited transit options. It is hard to get from neighborhoods in the south and west to regional services like Caltrain and Golden Gate Transit.
- Service isn't always reliable or frequent.
- Evening (10pm-midnight) and late-night service is too infrequent or non-existent. Areas of the city are inaccessible at night. As a result, transit isn't serving many types of trips, including late-night and early-morning shift work.
- Service is too slow. Cars use bus lanes and block bus access. On-street LRV and streetcar service is slowed by stop signs and traffic signals.

Solutions

Prioritize capital projects that improve reliability, speed of transit service, safety, and accessibility.

- Implement more transit lanes and transit priority at stops and signals for buses and light rail without compromising pedestrian safety at intersections.
- Improve the reliability and availability of real-time information and informational displays.
- Add real-time arrival information to more bus shelters.
- Expand transit service
 - Continue restoring service in line with the [2022 Muni Service Network](#) plan, and then continue expanding beyond pre-pandemic levels of service.
 - Reallocate some peak downtown service to crosstown routes and off-peak hours where ridership is recovering or frequency is low.
 - Extend evening service, which currently ends at midnight, to 1 a.m. as it was pre-pandemic.
 - Add back and expand evening and Owl service to provide transit access for late-night workers who otherwise would need to drive.
- Improve transfers & multi-mobility
 - Improve coordination of arrival/departure times between different lines, including connections between different agencies. This is especially important for connections between infrequent lines, where barely missing a connection can add a lot of time to a trip.
 - Expand bike-share and other multimodal infrastructure.
 - Allow bikes on Muni Metro during off-peak hours.
 - Expand availability of bike lockers throughout the city; Increase accessibility by integrating them with Clipper.
 - Transfer the Bay Wheels bike share program to a municipal ownership model to increase control and improve accessibility.
- Invest in building more affordable housing that can rely on these transit investments while avoiding issues like increased housing costs and gentrification.

Affordability

TJC Principle

Mobility should never be contingent on one's ability to pay transit fares. We understand that fare enforcement does not inherently increase safety and we must ensure that youth, people of color, and marginalized communities are not disproportionately targeted by fare enforcement.

The Vision

The framework for transportation funding should change from an enterprise to a public service with social value. Instead of treating transit riders like customers and relying on them to fund transit, we should look at alternative funding sources and keep transit-free or very low-cost for everyone.

What's not working

- Fares are unaffordable for low-income riders. Any fare increase now puts the burden on those continuing to ride transit, which goes against the goal of increasing transit ridership.
- Discount programs
 - It can be difficult to learn about fare discount programs and how to apply.
 - Many low-income transit riders don't qualify for fare discounts, which are often capped at federal poverty levels.
 - Among those who are eligible, buy-in is often low – only 45% of those eligible for Muni Lifeline actually use it.
 - The Muni Lifeline discount is inconvenient – it can only be used for monthly passes, and it is a burden to require users to visit a physical location to renew the Lifeline pass each month.
- Fare enforcement
 - The current fare enforcement program is inequitable. Fining transit users who cannot pay their transit fares criminalizes poverty.
 - There is a lack of transparency in how agencies decide where fare enforcement takes place and who is targeted. There is a concern that current practices place undue attention on youth, unhoused, and BIPOC transit riders.

Solutions

- Muni Lifeline program:
 - Change the eligibility threshold to 80% of the area median income to match the [HUD low-income limits](#) for San Francisco.
 - Reduce barriers to signing up for the program and raise the goal to 85% of eligible riders enrolled in the program (from the current 40%). Automatically enroll people eligible through other low-income programs like CalFresh.
 - Allow the Lifeline discount to apply to weekly passes and individual trips (as opposed to just the current monthly pass).
 - Make available to purchase at fare machines and other locations as soon as technically possible.
 - Merge with the Clipper START program as soon as technically feasible to simplify access for riders.

- Clipper START:
 - Adopt Clipper START as a permanent program.
 - Change the eligibility threshold to 80% of the Bay Area’s median household income to match the [HUD](#) definition of low-income.
 - Automatically enroll people eligible through other low-income programs like CalFresh.
- Fare enforcement
 - Increase transparency around fare enforcement, including which lines are being most patrolled and how those lines are identified as targets.
 - Fare enforcement officers should offer warnings instead of fines for all first offenses, and offer to enroll riders in low-income programs like Muni Lifeline or Clipper START if cost is a barrier to payment.
- Fare-free public transit for all
 - Longer-term, San Francisco public transit agencies should provide fare-free transit for all riders. Even with means-tested discount programs, fares are a regressive tax, and in order to get as many people as possible on public transit, we should eliminate the barrier of per-ride payment and shift towards a more progressive transit funding model.
 - In the shorter-term, transit agencies should provide fare-free pilots to build support for longer-term, more expansive programs.
- Allocate free transit passes to all new residents of affordable housing, especially those located near public transit or without on-site parking.

Safety

TJC Principle

In considering safety we should consider all forms of safety and safety for all people. It is vital that everyone – including operators, and riders – feel physically and psychologically safe while riding transit. We are committed to a transit future where everyone has safe access to public transit.

The Vision

The framework for safety in transportation should change from policing youth, BIPOC people, and the unhoused to creating a transportation system where everyone feels and is physically and psychologically safe. Definitions of safety need to include harassment, the risks posed by motor vehicle drivers to pedestrians and bicyclists, and safety for transit employees.

What’s not working

- Stops can feel unsafe at night when poorly lit, especially when there aren’t a lot of other people around.
- Sometimes riders experience harassment while waiting or riding. Operators face harassment and assaults while working.
- Some people feel unsafe without masking on transit vehicles.
- Motor vehicle drivers put transit riders in danger at and traveling to stops.
- Onboard, riders may feel unsafe because there isn’t an easy way to get help.
- Drug use in stations or onboard can feel unsafe or make other riders uncomfortable.



**“I want to feel safe walking across Fulton Street.
With shorter crossing time, I can barely make it across the street.”
- SDA stakeholder meeting**

Solutions

- Improve the lighting and maintenance at bus stops.
- Allow drop-off locations by rider request – not just at official stops – on Owl service for passenger safety at night.
- Increase frequency and improve reliability. These changes are safety improvements because they reduce the amount of time people are waiting at stops and lead to an increase in ridership so more people are at stops.
- Clean bus shelters and elevators regularly.
- When upgrading or installing new elevators, opt for elevators with transparent windows to increase visibility into each cab.
- Provide disposable masks and hand sanitizer on board transit vehicles for riders, as AC Transit continues to do in the East Bay.
- Continue to encourage masking – especially when sick – through public announcements and on-board advertising, centering the voices and needs of those who are immunocompromised.
- Support programs like the Safety Equity Initiative that prioritize safety from a gender and racial lens and work with impacted communities to find solutions.
- Provide better information to riders on what to do in case of safety concerns, including how to share concerns with agency staff.
- Transition fare enforcement personnel to trained community safety ambassadors to assist riders and address safety concerns for riders and operators. Their role should include connecting people struggling with mental illness and substance abuse to resources, de-escalating conflicts, and providing passenger assistance. This will require additional training and responsibilities so the qualifications and compensation will need to be revised.
- Invest in effective infrastructure that slows down cars and improves safety for riders accessing transit as pedestrians or by bike.
- Publish data and provide information to the public that makes it clear how safe transit is, especially compared to driving, and use language that differentiates between safety and discomfort.

Access and Accessibility

TJC Principle

Ensure full accessibility in the system by supporting both physical and programmatic initiatives such as accessible bus design, accessible paratransit, and universal design standards. Ensure adequate coverage so that everyone has access to fast, reliable transit service.

The Vision

Transit services, stops, and stations that are accessible for people of all abilities, all familiarity levels with transit, and speakers of all languages.

What's not working

- More language access is needed, including for discount programs like Muni Lifeline and Clipper START. New immigrants face wayfinding challenges.
- Wayfinding signage on the Muni system and at transfer points between transit services is confusing or non-existent. Bus stops are not always clearly marked.
- There is not enough signage on how to find elevators and to know what elevators are out of service. Elevators are too often out of service or dirty.
- There is often a lack of shelter and seating at bus stops. [Senior and Disability Action surveyed seniors and people with disabilities](#) and found that 42% said a bus shelter is a necessity and 40% said it depended on their health and the weather. Lack of mobility for seniors creates isolation and limits access to services.
- There aren't enough accessible ramps and curb cuts.
- There is a stigma against relying on paratransit.
- It can be difficult to get access to paratransit, especially for people with temporary mobility impairments.
- Cars parked at bus stops can make it difficult to board buses. The distance between some stops is too long, especially for accessible stops or on steep hills.
- Broken glass at stops impedes access to shelters and benches. Sometimes the customer information displays in shelters don't work or are nonexistent.
- Sometimes operators pass by people in wheelchairs waiting at stops. Crowding on vehicles can block space for disability and senior seating. Passengers don't always move for seniors and people with disabilities.
- It can be difficult to roll on and off light rail vehicles with wheelchairs, strollers, and grocery carts. Bicycles are not allowed on Muni light rail vehicles.
- The removal of virtual public comment options makes meetings less accessible to people with disabilities or who may be at risk of COVID-19.



Solutions

Wayfinding

- Work regionally to improve multilingual and standardized mapping and wayfinding, especially at regional transit connections, and to help people find elevators.
- Implement directional tactile paving paths in stations to help navigation for visually impaired riders.
- Ensure every bus stop in the city has well-displayed and consistent signage. Swiftly update signage ahead of planned service changes.
- Implement more auditory information at stops for people with visual impairments.
- Add customer information displays at more stops. Continue indicating when buses are full in real-time on these displays. Add real-time indications of the availability of wheelchair and bike spaces on buses.
- Create and promote training on how to use the system through a multilingual community concierge or ambassador programs for new riders.

Accessibility

- Invest in capital projects that improve accessibility.
- Install more lighting at bus stops.
- Ensure bus stops are adequately maintained and cleaned. If a third party is in charge of maintenance and cleaning, set clear standards and conduct regular audits to ensure they are upholding their commitment.
- Add shelters to bus stops where feasible.
- Add seating to all bus stops.
- Ensure shelters are built large enough to keep out rain.
- Improve pedestrian safety with more sidewalks and bus bulb-outs.
- Install ramps and curb cuts for people with disabilities, families with strollers, and people with carts.
- Upgrade all Muni Metro stops to be wheelchair accessible.
- Make sidewalks wider where needed.
- Upgrade standard transverse crosswalks to striped continental crosswalks, especially at high-volume intersections.
- Ensure traffic signals allocate enough time for pedestrians of all ages and abilities.
- Add more protected bike and mobility lanes, for a complete citywide network.
- Make it easier for people to use paratransit temporarily, for example by granting temporary access through healthcare providers for people with temporary mobility impairments.
- Allow call-in/virtual public comments at transit agency board meetings.

Part 2: How We Get There

Planning and Decision-Making

TJC Principle

Center and empower people of color, people with low incomes, seniors, people with disabilities, and transit-dependent riders in the decision-making process. Fund community-led multilingual outreach, embrace co-design, and prioritize the needs of transit-dependent populations in project development.

The Vision

Transit agencies exist to serve the community. Transit riders rely on agencies and agencies rely on transit riders for feedback and political support. This relationship should be one of continuous trust building and power sharing to build co-governance decision-making.

What's not working

- There exists a lack of trust and a sense that transit agencies don't care about the public.
- Limiting virtual public comment at SFMTA Board meetings restricts participation from people who can't attend meetings in person.
- While providing an abundance of information to the public is ideal, too much technical jargon in planning documents and in public presentations can exclude some community members.
- People with disabilities, people of color, working-class and low-income communities are the last to get resources, the first to lose them, and the last informed. They are often used as pilot sites. Inadequate outreach makes it feel like agencies are planning for these communities, not with them.
- Without careful planning, transit investments can create unintentional gentrification or displacement.
- Planning decisions are being made in silos – transit planning is happening separately from planning on housing affordability, which is separate from conversations about the workforce.

**“We shouldn't have to fight to get our buses back.”
- TNDC stakeholder meeting**

Solutions

Board accountability

- Meet the community where they are by holding board meetings out in the community. Board members should also attend other community meetings to share plans and get feedback.
- Consider changing the way board members are appointed to ensure members are accountable to the people they serve.
- Return to unlimited virtual public comment at SFMTA board meetings.

Planning Process

- Transit planning should consider community impacts including housing, gentrification and displacement, and workforce needs.
- Work with other local agencies to ensure more interconnected planning, funding, and implementation for transit together with affordable housing.

- Tie housing design to transit.
- Prioritize affordable housing and housing stabilization around frequent transit service.
- Create mixed-use, walkable development around transit stations, and transit hubs near essential services.
- Consider the needs and local context of specific communities and neighborhoods when developing city-wide plans and make sure neighborhood plans align with city-wide goals.
- Conduct holistic multimodal planning instead of focusing on single-mode plans.
- Improve how SFMTA does outreach to people of color, senior, and disability communities to make sure their needs are being addressed in projects.
- Provide more compensation and staff resources to the Citizens' Advisory Council (CAC) to collect feedback from the public.
- Meet the community where they are.
- Include labor, local workers, local businesses, and CBOs in regular project outreach.
- Allow enough time in the planning process to involve communities.
- Prioritize engagement before decisions are made.
- Compensate community members for their expertise and participation in planning processes.
- There should be a feedback loop between the community and SFMTA so people know how their feedback is used.
 - Neighborhoods and community groups should have a liaison they can develop a relationship with and reach out to with questions.
- SFMTA leadership and planning staff should reflect the diversity of the community.
 - Empower staff that have relationships with communities within the agency and have high-level staff with decision-making power to participate directly in community meetings.
- SFMTA should improve how it collects and uses qualitative data in decision-making.
 - Information on trips people can't make, safety, affordability, and accessibility can only come from talking to people, not automated data sources. In addition to more rider surveys, use focus groups, interviews, or other qualitative data collection techniques to gather data on the magnitude of impact on specific populations. Do community-led surveys and qualitative data collection.
- Ensure there is clear and detailed information available to the community and affected workers in advance whenever changes are made.
- Partner with community-based organizations to create maps and simplify text on public information.

Workforce and Agency Capacity



TJC Principle

We support workers and unions, and stand alongside transit drivers and workers in collective bargaining. Transit workers should have a safe and healthy workplace. We support equity and respect in the workplace for transit agency employees and a just transition for all transit workers impacted by policies supported by our coalition.

The Vision

We envision fully staffed and funded transit agencies that can reliably and safely provide all transit service and increased agency capacity to plan and build capital projects. Agencies should be healthy workplaces that can attract, hire, and retain the talented people needed to provide world-class transit service to riders.

What's not working

- Staff shortages make service unreliable and slow down needed capital and operational improvements. The hiring process to fill vacancies is too slow, often taking months. Onerous requirements prevent qualified candidates from taking positions.
- Employees are overworked and burning out from the agency being understaffed. There is poor morale and the workforce doesn't feel appreciated. Discipline for frontline employees is punitive, decreases morale, and creates conflict between operators and supervisors. Supervisors often prioritize enforcing rules, not supporting the frontline employees.
- Safety concerns from frontline staff need to be addressed. Conflicts between riders and operators create a safety risk and stress for operators.
- Problems with equipment and facilities make the job harder. Many operators live outside of SF and have to drive to start their shifts and there isn't enough parking.
- Some of the distrust of SFMTA comes from the street division, not just Muni. Communities need to see quicker implementation of projects, especially safety projects. Divisions across MTA need to work better together and cohesively communicate with the public.

Solutions

- Set operators up for success. Train supervisors to support frontline employees and de-escalate conflict and not use their power over employees. Give managers the authority to solve problems. Don't suspend operators for small infractions, instead start with verbal or written warnings.
- Increase recognition of the value and experience operators bring and create an internal structure to include operator voices in agency decision-making. Similar to community members, workers want to be heard, not just met with.
- Prioritize operator safety. Hire additional non-operator positions like community ambassadors and crisis response specialists so operators can focus on driving.
- Addressing parking needs for frontline employees who can't take transit to work. Work to get reciprocal agreements with other transit agencies for MTA employees to access free transit.
- Hire more workers. Reform San Francisco's civil service system to speed up hiring and reduce barriers to entry. Conduct better outreach for job openings in BIPOC communities and work with the community on workforce development programs.
- Fund community organizations to assist in community campaigns to make transit safer, recognize operators for their service to the community and recruit new employees.
- Steward organizational culture changes to increase morale and make internal coordination easier and more efficient.
- Work with labor to develop project labor agreements for capital improvement projects.
- Consider contracting out safety-sensitive projects so that they may be implemented quickly.

Funding

TJC Principle

An effective transit system is dependent on investment in both operations and capital improvements. Responsibility for needed transit funding must come from those with the ability to pay and not overly burden working families, low-income residents, or small businesses. A truly progressive revenue source is one where lower-income households pay a smaller proportion of their annual income than higher-income residents.

The Vision

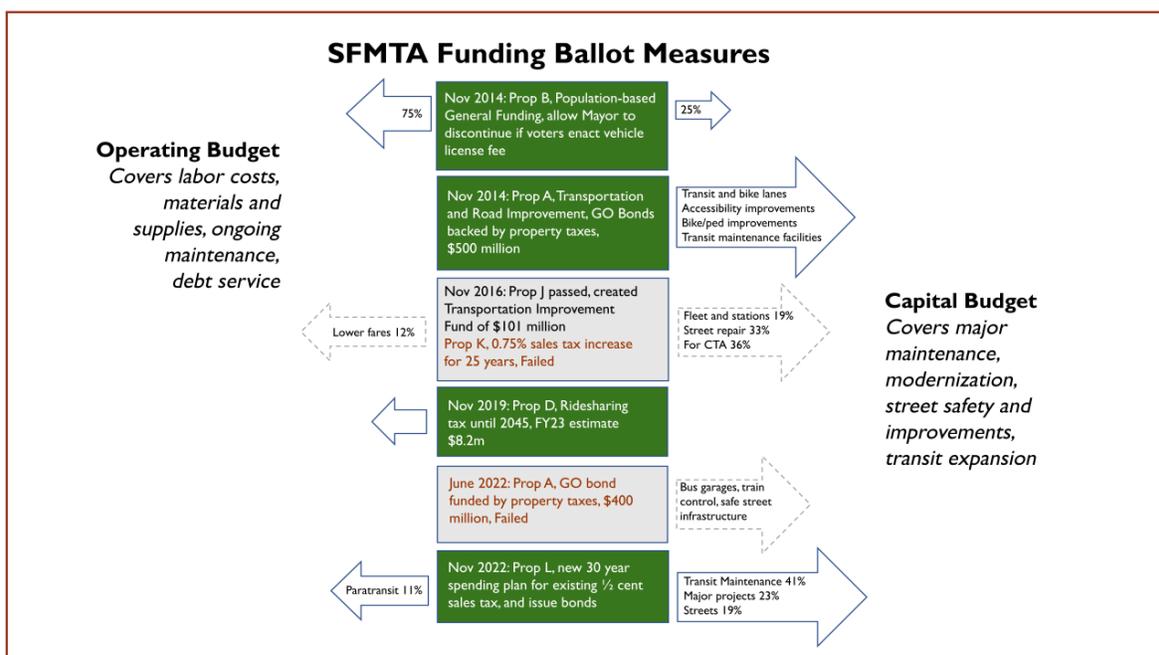
We envision a future where San Francisco has reliable progressive funding sources dedicated to funding transit. There should be enough funding to operate the transit we envision in this document and to do capital maintenance, modernization, and expansion.

Background

SFMTA has two budgets. The operating budget covers the cost of daily operations – service, staffing, fuel, materials, regular maintenance, and debt service. The capital budget covers the cost of building new infrastructure and modernization or major repairs to existing infrastructure. Some of the sources of SFMTA’s funding are dedicated to operating and some to capital, and some sources can be used for either.

Transit funding comes from federal, state of California, regional, and local sources. Most federal transit funding is restricted to capital except for a narrow set of exceptions. Historically the majority of SFMTA operating funds have come from local sources: city/country tax revenue and development fees, parking taxes, revenue and fines, and fares. The decisions around local funding can be made by the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor (for example, allocations from the general fund), the SFMTA board (fares and parking rates), and by the voters (propositions for taxes or bond measures).

Over the past ten years, successful ballot measures have primarily funded the capital budget.





What's not working

Even before the pandemic, SFMTA was on track to have a deficit in its operating budget. In addition, fare and parking revenue have not fully recovered from the pandemic. The San Francisco general fund is also decreasing due to pandemic impacts on the city's tax base. In January 2024, SFMTA projected a gap in the operating budget of \$12.7 million in Fiscal Year 2025-2026 and a gap of over \$240 million a year starting in 2026-2027.

The cost to provide the same level of service is going up with inflation. Also to meet the goals in this report, SFMTA's budget will need to increase to provide more service, have more competitive wages, increase agency capacity with more employees, and other changes to improve working conditions.

On the capital side, investment is needed to update, replace, and expand infrastructure, improve safety and access, and speed-up and modernize transit service. SFMTA has a [capital improvement program for FY23-FY27](#) of \$2,614.17 million over the 5 years. In their 30-year plan ([Transportation 2050](#)) SFMTA identified a need of [\\$108.4 billion and a gap of \\$44.3 billion](#) between identified funding and the total need. Inflation is also increasing the costs of transit capital projects, so these numbers will go up over time.

Solutions

Transit needs additional funding from all types of sources to close these gaps. We support federal, state, and regional operating funding – funding from these sources is crucial to minimize the tax burden on the local level; however, the focus of this document is funding sources within the control of the people and elected officials of San Francisco. Additional local funding can come from SFMTA-controlled sources (primarily parking and fares), city-controlled sources (primarily increasing SFMTA's allotment of the General Fund), and sources passed by the voters.

We use [five criteria](#) to evaluate local funding sources: annual revenue generated, reliability of funding, equity, mode shift, and political feasibility. Our equity considerations for revenue sources are based on the impact of that source on low-income people.

SFMTA Sources

(i) Fares

We don't support SFMTA raising fares. Increasing fares, especially at a time when we are trying to rebuild ridership, shifts the burden even more on low-income riders and discourages mode-shift.

(ii) Parking

SFMTA needs to balance the goals of equity, mode shift, and revenue generation in their design of parking policies and fees. Parking policies are an important driver of mode shift and have the potential to raise reliable funding. To address equity goals, increasing the cost of parking should be coupled with a discount program for low-income people who are reliant on personal vehicles.

SFMTA should be creative in designing a residential permit program that raises funds for transit, encourages mode shift, and improves parking access. Residential permits should be available for all neighborhoods in the city, and be neighborhood-specific to take into consideration different needs. For example, a permit program in the Tenderloin should include residents and workers.

(iii) City controlled sources

While we support additional transit funding from the General Fund, we know that it is not a reliable source of funds and comes at the expense of other important needs in the City budget. More funds from the General Fund should be used to plug temporary holes in the budget to prevent service cuts but isn't a sustainable dedicated source that SFMTA and riders can rely on in the long term.

(iv) Ballot measures

We are aware of a planned regional funding measure for transit in 2026. However, we don't know how much would be allocated to SFMTA or the likelihood of it passing. We believe the voters of San Francisco need to approve a ballot measure(s) to provide sustainable local operating funding. We evaluated several possible revenue sources using our funding criteria.

Based on our evaluation criteria, we support several possible revenue sources and are open to new sources that meet the criteria. We support including a moratorium on fare increases as part of a ballot measure.

Table of Sources Under Consideration

	Annual revenue estimate	Equity	Reliability	Leads to mode shift
Ad valorem property tax increase	Depends on rate, high potential.	Based on the value of the property.		
Increase TNC tax rate	Depends on rate increase; likely \$10-30M	Higher usage by higher income people		
Vehicle registration fee increase	Increase from 0.65% to 2%, estimate ~\$75 million	Based on the value of the vehicle.	Goes to the general fund. If passed, the mayor can end the general fund transfer increases guaranteed in 2014's Prop B.	
Dedicate the remaining 20% of parking tax revenue to SFMTA	~\$13 million			Would not increase the cost of parking so unlikely to lead to mode shift
Commercial parking tax increase	Depends on the increase, raising from 25% to 30% could generate ~10.4 million			

Matrix of potential local revenue sources which could be put on the ballot to help fund SFMTA.

Key	Best option for achieving the criteria.
	Moderate or uncertain impact on achieving the criteria.
	Less feasible option for achieving the criteria.

Conclusion

San Francisco needs more sustainable funding sources for transit operations and capital improvements to provide the service the community needs. For equity, economic, and environmental reasons we cannot afford to allow transit service to continue to deteriorate. We have to address past inequitable decisions. This report lays out our vision for what transit should be. We identify aspects of the service, safety and affordability, access and accessibility, planning and governance, workforce and agency capacity that need to change. We provide short-term policy proposals to build toward the vision and rebuild community trust in transit agencies.

Transit riders are in the position to both support transit agencies and hold them accountable. This document outlines our support for transit agencies and the steps we need them to take to earn community support for additional funding.

To close the gap in both SFMTA's operating and capital budgets and fund the vision this report puts forward, the agency will need additional funding from federal, state, regional, and local sources. At the same time, we cannot expect officials at other levels of government to save us. We must pass an equitable ballot measure that reliably provides the funding we need and will strengthen Muni to contribute to mode shift.



Sources and Special Thanks

This report was written by Laurel Paget-Seekins as a consultant with San Francisco Transit Riders (SFTR) and edited by Dylan Fabris, Community and Policy Manager at SFTR. Thank you to the many San Francisco community members, transit riders, and organizations who contributed to this report through interviews and workshops, without which this report would not have been possible. In particular, thank you to the following organizations for lending your time, members, staff, insight, and expertise:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 350 San Francisco | Mercy Housing California |
| And Architecture and Community Planning | Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA) |
| All Things Bayview | One Treasure Island |
| Bayview Hunters Point Community Advocates | People Organized to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights (PODER) |
| Bayview Senior Services | Progress Foundation |
| Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center (BHNC) | San Francisco Bike Coalition |
| Bill Sorro Housing Program (BiSHoP) | San Francisco Community Land Trust (SFCLT) |
| Chinatown Community Development Center (CCDC) | San Francisco Housing Development Corporation (SFHDC) |
| Community Design Center | Self-Help for the Elderly |
| Conard House | Senior and Disability Action (SDA) |
| Council of Community Housing Organizations (CCHO) | SFTR's Transit Planning Working Group |
| Democratic Socialists of America, San Francisco Chapter | South of Market Community Action Network (SOMCAN) |
| Economic Development on Third | Swords to Plowshares |
| Episcopal Community Services | Tenderloin Community Benefit District |
| Family Connections Centers | Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation (TNDC) |
| GreenAction | Transport Workers Union Local 250A |
| Homeownership SF | Urban Habitat |
| Homerise | Walk San Francisco |
| International Union of Operating Engineers Local 3 | Young Community Developers |
| Jobs with Justice San Francisco | |
| Livable City | |

Report contributions by Vinita Goyal, Executive Director; Jaime Vilorio and Peter Straus, Board Members; Nick Levi, Community Organizer; and Cyrus Hall, member at San Francisco Transit Riders.

Graphics and design by Reanne Lacosta, Communications Manager at San Francisco Transit Riders.

Published March 2024.