



## Aaron Peskin - *Ride the Vote!*

### 2024 San Francisco Mayoral candidate questionnaire

**1. What office are you running for?**

Mayor of San Francisco

**2. What is your name?**

Aaron Peskin

**3. Do you have a section on your website about public transit, transportation, or mobility? If so, please provide a link.**

<https://www.aaron2024.com/transit-platform>

**4. How do you usually get around San Francisco? Please tell us when and why you use cars, trains, Muni buses, bikes, walking, wheelchairs, or any other mode you frequently use for transportation.**

I walk a lot and serve a district that is walkable and transit rich, and while I do take public transit as much as possible (on the 30, 45 and Van Ness BRT/49 to work), campaigning citywide is difficult without driving my one car family's 2005 Prius.

**5. How often do you ride public transit?**

Weekly.

**6. If elected, what would be your top transportation priorities? This can include priorities related to public transit, active transportation, driving, or any other mode of transportation.**

I'm the only major candidate in this race who has published a comprehensive transit platform outlining my priorities:

- Staffing up and fully funding MUNI
- Creating safe and walkable neighborhoods
- Transit Equity
- Accountability from SFMTA to our neighborhoods and diverse communities
- Providing safe and effective alternatives to cars, cutting congestion and traffic citywide

I'd encourage you to read the white paper my campaign has published on these topics, found at <https://www.aaron2024.com/transit-platform>

7. San Francisco's **Transit First Policy** applies to all officers, boards, commissions, and departments of the city and county, and states that within San Francisco, travel by public transit, by bicycle and on foot must be an attractive alternative to travel by private automobile. Do you support the principles laid out in the full Transit First Policy? If so, how will you use your position to advance the policy?

I fully support a transit-first approach for a more livable and sustainable city, and have worked my whole career to further its goals and values. I was the author of Proposition A in 2007 which gave the SFMTA more autonomy and additional dedicated revenue streams. I led the charge to establish our city's first dedicated bus lanes, and pushed for and passed the state's first local tax effort on TNCs which now provides millions of additional revenues for the SFMTA and Vision Zero quickbuilds annually. As the former chair of the County Transportation Authority, I prioritized strategic investments for transportation affordability, sustainability, and accessibility including bringing Caltrain to the Transbay Terminal. I worked to pass a regional Caltrain sales tax that both netted us a new source of revenue for regional transit and gave us a new, more effective governance structure. And when our current mayor failed to pass the 2022 MTA bond, I stepped up to campaign for and help pass Prop L which generated billions in matching funds to secure a viable future for public transit in San Francisco. I'm incredibly proud of my transportation record, including the often-overlooked smaller capital projects like protected bike lanes and dedicated bus lanes that keep our city truly public transit-oriented.

As Mayor, I would start by fully funding and staffing up our transit system so that public transportation represents a better alternative to driving for everyone in our city. I'd work with SFMTA and our communities to expand protected bike lanes and dedicated bus lanes, as well as increasing pedestrian safety in our city's most dangerous intersections. None of this can be accomplished without experienced strong leadership and management, something we unfortunately lack in Room 200 today.

- 8. What role do you think law enforcement, fare enforcement, community ambassadors, and private security should play, if any, in patrolling transit? What should Muni do to improve safety and the sense of safety for riders?**

Safety and feeling secure using our city's transit system is a top priority for me. I've always said public safety is a progressive value, and have been a champion for community policing for decades. We need to increase programs like community ambassadors, and increase cross-departmental coordination with SFMTA and BART. We also need our ambassadors, fare-checkers, and law enforcement to be culturally and language competent, something I pushed for in Chinatown back in 2000. It doesn't just make people safe, it makes them feel safe, which is essential if we're going to get ridership back to pre-pandemic levels. It's a problem of staffing and coordination, and one I am suited to address when I'm elected mayor.

- 9. Muni is facing a budget deficit of up to \$322m starting in 2026. How would you work towards financial stability for Muni? What new revenue sources should be on (or off) the table? How should the City address the deficit if funding from other levels of government do not materialize? If new sources of funding are not found, what kinds of SFMTA cuts would you support or oppose?**

As President of the Board of Supervisors, I am no stranger to the financial constraints our city is under. We need to explore every option at our disposal, and I also believe there are numerous policies that the city can pursue to better use its existing financial resources - as evidenced by my recent actions to renegotiate a city lease that saved taxpayers over \$20 million, and craft a ballot measure to create an Inspector General empowered to investigate waste, fraud, and abuse in city government.

I've worked to increase both city and regional funding for MUNI - including Prop L in 2022 that secured hundreds of millions for transit and Prop A in 2007 that allocated parking fees and fines to MUNI, and I'll continue to prioritize transit funding as mayor.

I also was the author of and led the effort to pass Prop D which established a per ride tax on Uber and Lyft which funds the SFMTA.

Alongside dedicating more local resources to MUNI and BART, we need to better leverage state and federal funding. We missed out on significant infrastructure resources from the Inflation Reduction Act because we had no mechanism to channel the funding - something I called for our City Administrator to remedy. And we missed out on 2022's SFMTA Bond because our current mayor both insisted on using it as a self-promotional tool while simultaneously failing to make it a top priority in the cycle. As mayor I will make sure that MUNI has the funding, management and leadership it needs to remain operational and avoid the dramatic scenarios laid out in this question.

10. Since the pandemic, different Bay Area transit agencies have adopted a variety of fare policies to help recover ridership and revenue. This year, **Muni approved** a 14% fare increase for most of its riders. On the other hand, San Francisco Bay Ferry **lowered fares**, and has seen ridership grow quickly as a result. Petaluma Transit also expects to see **large increases in ridership** since using the city's general fund money to make fares free this year.

Currently, only about **8%** of Muni's total revenue comes from fares.

What role should fares and fare increases play in the future of Muni? Do you support raising fares to balance Muni's budget and keep up with the cost of inflation, or should Muni consider lowering or freezing fares to grow ridership? If you support raising fares, how should Muni address equity concerns for low-income riders, most of whom are not enrolled in Muni's Lifeline discount program? If you support fare-free public transportation or fare freezes, what alternative funding sources do you support?

I joined with Supervisor Preston to help lead the charge against fare increases, and was a proud supporter of programs to secure free MUNI for youth and seniors. People who rely on MUNI to get around shouldn't be financially burdened by unnecessary fare hikes, especially when such a low percentage of MUNI's funding comes from this source. We need to explore different options to continue MUNI's funding, including new bonds and taxes, leveraging state and federal resources, and redirecting other SFMTA revenue streams (such as tickets) to bolster transit services.

11. How should San Francisco work toward equitable access to public transit for all people, no matter their race, gender, abilities, neighborhood, income, or other characteristics? Do you support or oppose any local or regional transportation projects or policies because of the effect they will have on equitable transit access?

As I've laid out in my platform, we can't be a truly transit-first city without centering equity. I fought to restore service on lines like the 8 and 8x that serve working and middle class neighborhoods because transit is vital to economic opportunity, and I will continue to prioritize transit projects and funding that serve historically marginalized and low-income San Francisco. This includes expanding service in places like the southeast part of San Francisco in neighborhoods like Visitacion Valley and Bayview Hunters-Point that have long been underserved by public transit options.

**12.A [1993 ballot measure](#) made it official city policy that all elected city officials must ride Muni or other public transit to work at least twice a week. If elected, how closely will you abide by this policy?**

I promise to abide by it fully, as I have through my entire quarter-century in public office. I have succeeded in being elected to the Board of Supervisors 5 times by riding public transit!

**13. San Franciscans have strongly supported SFMTA's independence from the city's electoral politics in two separate elections over the past several decades, including Prop E in 1999 and Prop A in 2007. What are your positions on SFMTA's independence from the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor's office? How would you make SFMTA more accountable to San Franciscans?**

I was the author of Prop. A in 2007 so that speaks for itself. Unfortunately, while the SFMTA has largely been autonomous from the Board of Supervisors it is not autonomous from the Mayor's office. We can hold SFMTA accountable to our neighborhoods, and it starts by rejecting the petty politics of fear and vindictiveness that have been all too common amongst some of my opponents. I want City Hall to be a place where people want to come to work, where they feel supported by and connected to both the mayor and the communities they serve. That's the type of environment that will get us the results San Franciscans deserve from their transit officials. Make no mistake- I believe in strong management, and will do everything in my power to keep SFMTA accountable, but (unlike our current mayor) will foster an environment where people don't always feel like they need to watch their back, and can instead openly embrace creativity, passion and a true dedication to public service unburdened by the fear of political retribution or whiplash. I will also encourage the SFMTA to become better communicators with our neighborhoods which is an area where they have room for improvement.

**14. The Mayor appoints members to the SFMTA's Board of Directors, which provides oversight over agency policy and the Director of Transportation. If presented with a vacancy on the Board of Directors, what qualities would you look for in a candidate for SFMTA leadership?**

Like I said in my previous answer, I want people who are tied and responsive to community, who are creative, knowledgeable, mature and who hold a deep and abiding passion for public service. High-profile commissions like SFMTA have long been used as political rewards and springboards. I would change that. I would appoint directors who care about transit's future above personal ambition, and who have the dedication and intelligence to actually get us through the troubled times our transit system is going through. Anything less would be a disservice to our city and the hundreds of thousands of San Franciscans who rely on public transit.

**15. Transit-only lanes provide faster and more reliable service. They prevent buses from being stuck in traffic and save money that can be reinvested in additional transit service. If elected, would you work to expedite the creation of new transit-only lanes in San Francisco? If so, what corridors would you prioritize for transit-only lanes and other needed transit improvements?**

Absolutely. I'm proud to have championed our city's first dedicated bus lanes, and would work to expand this crucial infrastructure project to more corridors in our city. But to do that, we need to hold SFMTA accountable to their timelines and cost estimates, something our current leadership has had trouble doing.

**16. While transit ridership is very high in some neighborhoods, it remains lower in others, including San Francisco's outer western and southeastern neighborhoods. As Mayor, how would you promote high transit ridership across the whole city?**

People don't ride the bus for three primary reasons- it's too expensive, doesn't get them where they need to go when they need to go, or they feel unsafe. I have concrete plans to address all three of these issues, including expanding programs that provide fare subsidies for low-income San Franciscans, expanding service and reliability in areas where residents haven't been well served by MUNI, and coordinating community policing initiatives to ensure rider safety, especially at night. We can't be a transit-first city until all residents would rather take transit than drive, and that means expanding transit options into these parts of our city.

#### **Rapid-fire questions**

***Feel free to expand on your answers to any of these questions, but all that we're looking for is a quick "yes" or "no."***

17. Did you support [Proposition A \(2022\)](#), which would have authorized up to \$400m in general obligation bonds to support SF transportation infrastructure projects?

Yes

18. Did you support [Proposition I \(2022\)](#), which would have reopened the Great Highway to cars at all times, and reopened JFK Promenade to cars on weekdays?

No

19. Did you support [Proposition J \(2022\)](#) which codified a permanent car-free JFK Promenade?

I took no position

20. Did you support [Proposition L \(2022\)](#), which approved a new 2022 Transportation Expenditure Plan and extended an existing half-cent sales tax for transportation for 30 years to fund the plan?

Yes

21. Did you support [SB 1031 \(2024; Wiener, Wahab\)](#), the authorizing legislation for a regional transportation funding measure?

Yes

22. Do you support this year's [Proposition L \(Fund the Bus\)](#), which will tax ride-hail companies to generate up to \$30 million annually for transit in San Francisco?

Not as of yet. Earlier this year, before this measure had even been proposed, I played a leading role in negotiating a comprehensive overhaul of the City's Business Tax system to reform the way our city takes in tax revenue from the business community. The result is Prop. M on this November's ballot which will make our city fiscally more resilient and fairer, and bring tax relief thousands of struggling small businesses. Because these complex multi-party negotiations required a lot of give and take with labor, and a wide array of the business community I am continuing to grapple with Prop. L and its impacts on Prop. M.

23. Do you support this year's [Proposition K \(Ocean Beach Park\)](#), which will create a new park by permanently closing the Upper Great Highway between Lincoln Way and Sloat Boulevard to cars?

Regarding the Great Highway, I think that the compromise that was crafted between stakeholders that allows for weekend recreation uses and commute hour car use has proved to be a workable compromise. Frankly I believe this is a decision that needs to heavily involve community voices, and I'm still on a listening tour to hear input from both opponents and proponents.



*Note: This Ride the Vote! questionnaire is provided to the public for informational purposes only and does not imply endorsement by San Francisco Transit Riders. San Francisco Transit Riders does not endorse electoral candidates. Responses to this questionnaire are presented as submitted by the candidate unless otherwise noted.*



San Francisco Transit Riders is the city's member-supported, grassroots, nonprofit advocate for excellent, affordable, and growing public transit. We believe that empowering everyday transit riders to speak up for rider-first policies will bring us the world-class transit system we need for a livable, sustainable, and accessible San Francisco.

[www.sftransitriders.org](http://www.sftransitriders.org)

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