



Bilal Mahmood - *Ride the Vote!*

2024 San Francisco Board of Supervisors candidate questionnaire

1. What office are you running for?

Board of Supervisors, District 5

2. What is your name?

Bilal Mahmood

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

<https://www.bilalmahmood.com/platform#transit>

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 ride BART, take Muni and walk for everyday place-to-place mobility. As a Tenderloin resident, I feel grateful that my neighborhood is located in the heart of downtown, with accessibility to a majority of transportation lines that can take me anywhere in the city in an affordable and sustainable manner.

5. How often do you ride public transit?

I ride public transit daily.

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.

My top priorities for transportation would be to ensure public transit in District 5 is safe and reliable for all pedestrians, cyclists, and families. District 5 has some of the highest traffic fatality rates, especially in Hayes Valley and the Tenderloin. With service line cuts and uncertain funding, MUNI reliability is a top of mind concern for many residents. I believe we must invest in safety and reliability of public transit if we are to ensure all communities can equitably access the food, parks, and schools they need to thrive.

If elected, I will focus on:

- Increasing MUNI reliability by hiring more MUNI drivers: Cut the red tape that makes it take 255 days to hire a MUNI driver, allowing us to increase the frequency and number of operating MUNI cars for more reliable service
- Improving traffic safety: Advocate for the provision of more automated speed enforcement cameras and conversion of one-way to two-way streets to slow traffic in our neighborhoods
- Accelerating car free streets by cutting red tape: Coordinate city departments to expand slow streets and make progress on initiatives like car-free Hayes Street and the Golden Gate Greenway

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?

Yes, I fully support the principles laid out in the Transit First Policy. Transit is an intersectional issue that, when prioritized, can help alleviate other top issues under a Supervisor's purview. As Supervisor, I will prioritize transportation equity and sustainability to uplift our residents, workers, and businesses.

To support our workers and our local economy, we must ensure more affordable housing, living wages, and safe and reliable transit.

As a housing advocate, I believe we must change our zoning laws and housing permitting processes to ensure we can build more housing along commercial and

transit corridors. When workers can live close to where they work, we reduce commute times, increase ridership, and ensure access to opportunity.

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?

Law enforcement, fare enforcement, community ambassador all play a ensuring safety on our transit system. The unfortunate reality hate crimes have been rising across San Francisco, with many occurring on Muni. Over the last 10 years, there has been a nearly 200% increase in hate crimes against so many groups - Black, Asian, Muslim, Jewish, LGBTQIA+, Latino, and more. In the last year, there has been an extraordinary rise in hate incidents against Muslim, Arab, and Jewish residents of the city. In 2023, I helped launch the Let's Talk About Us campaign with the Asian Women's Shelter and BART, to raise awareness for harassment on public transit in the AAPI community. This rise in incidents, and its significant implications for mental and physical health for affected groups, led me to author and pass a resolution with the SF Democratic Party to declare racism and hate incidents a public health crisis for all marginalized communities - the first of its kind in the nation.

As Supervisor, I will carry this resolution forward into action to ensure tracking of these instances and I will allocate budget from the Department of Public Health towards funding to victims of hate crimes and incidents with mental health, physical health, and supportive services, increasing language access for victims services, and researching best practices for hate crime and incident prevention education.

Muni has also implemented data driven safety initiatives, such as MuniSafe and the Safety Equity Initiative to reduce conflict and partner with law enforcement when necessary. Muni should continue to monitor the efficacy of these programs and expand them across its system for improved safety outcomes for its ridership.

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?

Supporting Prop L is a step towards short-term financial stability for Muni. Should a deficit continue, the City should consider general fund dollars to support Muni. However, the focus for long-term results should be on cutting bureaucracy to ensure our existing dollars are maximized. Accordingly, we should focus on addressing the staffing crisis at MTA - by cutting the red tape in the hiring process that makes it take on average 255 days to hire a Muni driver, we can increase the frequency and number of operating Muni cars for more reliable service and increased ridership.

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?

Free muni is an admirable long term goal, but amidst a fiscal budget crisis we must focus on outcomes now - especially towards service reliability and safety. It should also be noted that state funding requires Muni enforce fare payments in order to receive funding. I do not support raising fares, as I think it could further disincentivize ridership and payment.

As mentioned previously, we must focus on improving our transit infrastructure. That starts with solving the staffing crisis affecting MTA drivers and bus operators, reducing the time to hire and bureaucracy impeding their hiring. Without sufficient staffing, we can not ensure regular service operation hours of our buses. Simultaneously, we must ensure increased safety and security on public transit, so that women, children, and communities of color can safely ride to and from school, work, or the stores.

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?

Working towards equitable transportation access means co-creating solutions with the communities impacted by planning decisions to ensure just solutions which address systemic inequities, and ensuring every community has frequent and reliable access to public transit to ensure equitable access to work, school, food, etc. Transit is the connective infrastructure that binds a city together, and unless it is guaranteed in every neighborhood and community equitably across racial and socio-economic lines, it is not fulfilling its purpose.

To that effect, I support Muni's free service for seniors and youth, as well as discounts for those with disabilities as policies rooted in equitable transit access.

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?

Given I am already a daily Muni rider, I will 100% abide by this policy and continue utilizing public transit. However, it should be noted that I live in the Tenderloin and would walk to City Hall most days as it is a carbon-free way to commute.

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?

SFMTA's independence from the BOS and Mayor's office allows the SFMTA to remain depoliticized and for its board to focus on advancing equity and creating a world-class transit system. SFMTA engages in outreach to its ridership for feedback to improve service and as Supervisor, I would encourage this continue and I will independently solicit feedback from District 5 constituent to ensure the SFMTA budget is aligned with constituent priorities. The BOS approval of SFMTA's budget serves as an adequate accountability check.

14. 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? What streets in your district would you prioritize for transit-only lanes and other needed transit improvements?

Yes, I support converting mixed-traffic lanes to transit-only lanes. McAllister (line 38) is a great example of an approved mixed-traffic lane conversion. Of the corridors that have enough capacity and traffic to justify bus lanes and have not been approved, Stanyan (lines 7/33) and Masonic (line 43) and Haight between Divisadero and Baker (single center-running lane downhill similar to Haight between Buchanan and Octavia, 6/7) would be lanes to propose for conversion.

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

Yes

16. 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

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

Yes

18. 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

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

Yes

20. 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?

Yes

21. 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?

Yes

22. District 5 residents rely on Muni routes 31-Balboa and 21-Hayes, which both connect the Tenderloin to other communities on the west side of the district and beyond. Neither of these routes have yet returned to pre-pandemic ridership levels, and the 21 currently has the lowest ridership recovery out of all of Muni's active lines. Will you work to keep the 31 and 21 running in the face of Muni's budget deficit? If so, how?

Yes, I will work to keep the 31 and 21 as active lines in our District. To do so, we must ensure reliability by addressing our staffing crisis in MTA and reduce the time to hire Muni drivers, in turn increasing the frequency of running Muni lines for workers to use to get to work.

23. Masonic Street, Divisadero, and most of the Tenderloin are all part of San Francisco's [High Injury Network](#) – the 12 percent of city streets where 68 percent of severe and fatal traffic injuries occur. For transit riders, accessibility and pedestrian safety are concerns when traveling to and waiting at bus stops. How will you work to help people have safe access to, from, and at bus stops, especially in areas on the High Injury Network?

While the district benefits from centralized BART & Muni lines, slow streets, and car-free zones, we are also the center for some of the highest offenders for traffic safety - the Tenderloin and Hayes Valley have some of the highest traffic collisions in the entire city. We need to accordingly ensure we improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians by advocating for more automated speed enforcement cameras, protected bikes lanes, and turning one-way streets into two-way streets to slow speeding.

We must also focus on achieving our Vision Zero goals, by increasing the reliability and safety of public transit as an alternative to cars.

To improve reliability, I will focus on addressing the staffing crisis at MTA - by cutting the red tape in the hiring process that makes it take on average 255 days to hire a Muni driver, we can increase the frequency and number of operating Muni cars for

more reliable service. Second, we must prioritize traffic safety for cyclists and pedestrians - District 5 has some of the highest traffic fatality intersections, and we must advocate for more automated speed enforcement cameras and conversion of one way to two way streets in an effort to slow traffic throughout the respective neighborhoods. In 2021, I collaborated with state legislators to fundraise for automated speed enforcement camera legislation, and will continue to partner at the state level to advocate for such reforms.

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

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