



Nelson Mei - *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?

Nelson Mei

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

No, I do not currently have a section on my website about public transit, transportation, or mobility. However, I am planning to optimize our public transportation system to ensure it is more efficient, reliable, and accessible to all. Additionally, I am focused on reducing traffic congestion throughout the city to improve daily commutes and promote more sustainable mobility options for everyone.

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 primarily rely on driving to navigate the city, as it offers flexibility, especially when juggling multiple appointments or covering longer distances. However, I recognize that for many popular destinations, finding parking can be a challenge, which is why I frequently opt for public transportation. Muni and BART are great alternatives that allow me to avoid parking hassles while still getting to my destination on time. My personal experience with both driving and public transit fuels my commitment to

improving the transportation network across San Francisco. I understand the frustrations residents face with traffic congestion and limited parking, and I believe that by optimizing our public transportation system, we can make getting around the city more efficient, convenient, and accessible for everyone.

5. How often do you ride public transit?

A few times a month.

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.

Driving will be my top transportation priority, as many residents depend on their vehicles to get around. However, I also recognize the importance of public transit like Muni and BART for those who rely on it. I plan to optimize Muni operations by increasing the number of buses on key routes, boosting frequency during peak hours like 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., and expanding service coverage so people won't have to walk long distances to reach a bus stop. My goal is to ensure that both drivers and public transit users can move around the city efficiently and comfortably.

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 making public transit, cycling, and walking more attractive and convenient, and San Francisco's Transit First Policy aligns perfectly with my vision. First, many San Francisco residents, including myself, rely on public transit regularly, and I am committed to optimizing and improving the system regardless of the policy. Second, while San Francisco already has great roads for biking, there's still room for improvement, and I want to make the city a more bike-friendly place. Finally, by encouraging more people to use public transit, bike, and walk, we can significantly reduce carbon emissions—something I strongly support for the benefit of our environment and future generations.

If elected, I will use my position to advance the Transit First Policy by taking several key actions. First, I will push for improvements in public transit by increasing the frequency of buses and expanding coverage to underserved areas, making it a more reliable and convenient option for everyone. Just as important, I will prioritize safety,

ensuring that public transit is a secure and comfortable experience for all users. Second, I will advocate for the expansion of safe and accessible bike lanes across the city, connecting neighborhoods and making biking a more attractive and safe alternative. Third, I will work to improve pedestrian infrastructure by enhancing crosswalk safety, widening sidewalks where necessary, and creating more pedestrian-friendly zones. I am also open to making Muni free for all San Francisco residents, but I need to thoroughly analyze the pros and cons to ensure it is a feasible and beneficial solution for the city. By prioritizing these efforts, including safety measures, we can make walking, biking, and public transit the preferred choices for San Franciscans, aligning with the Transit First Policy and reducing our dependence on private vehicles.

8. 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?

If presented with a vacancy on the SFMTA Board of Directors, I would prioritize appointing a candidate with a strong background in transportation policy, urban planning, or public infrastructure. I would seek someone who understands the complexities of running a major transit system like Muni, and who can balance the needs of different stakeholders, from transit riders to pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers. Additionally, the candidate should have a proven track record of leadership, a commitment to equity, and a clear vision for how to improve San Francisco's transportation system. It's also important that the appointee be a strong communicator who is open to public input and transparent in decision-making. They should be focused on ensuring that SFMTA is accountable to all San Franciscans and responsive to the city's evolving transportation needs. Finally, I would look for someone who values innovation, sustainability, and has the ability to navigate the budgetary challenges the agency faces, while keeping an eye on long-term solutions.

9. 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 ambassadors, and private security all have important roles to play in patrolling transit and ensuring a safe environment for Muni riders. Law enforcement should focus on responding to serious incidents, while fare enforcement can ensure that the system is used fairly and help prevent disruptive behavior. Community ambassadors can serve as a visible, friendly presence, providing assistance, information, and a calming influence on public transit. Private security

could be deployed at high-traffic locations or during peak hours to enhance overall safety.

To improve safety and the sense of safety for riders, Muni should increase visible security personnel across the system, especially during peak hours and in more isolated areas. Installing more cameras and ensuring they are actively monitored can deter crime and help respond quickly to any incidents. Additionally, improved lighting at stations, regular maintenance of vehicles and stops, and more frequent service can reduce wait times, which helps reduce the sense of vulnerability. Overall, a multi-layered approach combining visible security, timely responses, and community involvement can make Muni a safer and more comfortable experience for all riders.

10. 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?

To work toward financial stability for Muni, I would first prioritize securing additional funding from state and federal sources, while also exploring partnerships with private businesses to sponsor or support transit initiatives. If funding from other levels of government doesn't materialize, we need to consider new revenue sources. Some potential options on the table could include congestion pricing, increasing parking fees, or a targeted sales tax. However, I would be cautious about fare hikes, as they could discourage ridership. If cuts become necessary, I would oppose reducing service in underserved areas or during peak hours. Instead, I would focus on cutting non-essential expenses while protecting the core services that riders rely on.

11. 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?

While a fare increase is one option to address Muni's budget deficit, I would carefully consider it. In my view, a better approach is to seek more state and federal funding to support Muni's operations. Additionally, increasing revenue from advertising and other commercial ventures could be an effective way to boost income without burdening riders. I am also open to the idea of making Muni completely free for all residents. This would not only grow ridership but also provide a valuable benefit to the people of San Francisco. Ultimately, the role of government is to make people's lives easier and better, and I believe this is a step in the right direction.

12. 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?

San Francisco must ensure that public transit is accessible and equitable for all people, regardless of their race, gender, abilities, neighborhood, or income. This means expanding transit routes to underserved areas, improving accessibility for people with disabilities, and ensuring affordability for low-income riders. I also support initiatives to make public transit safer, particularly for women, the elderly, and vulnerable communities.

13. 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 fully support encouraging the use of public transit and believe it's important for elected officials to understand the system by using it themselves. However, I don't agree with making it mandatory. Instead, I believe officials should be motivated to ride public transit because it offers valuable insight into the system and because it is a convenient option, not due to a requirement. My focus is on ensuring that public transit is reliable, convenient, and attractive for everyone, and I will personally use it as needed to stay connected with the issues riders face.

14. 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 respect the decisions made by San Franciscans to support SFMTA's independence through Prop E and Prop A. I believe that keeping SFMTA independent from electoral politics allows for more consistent, long-term planning and decision-making, which is essential for transit infrastructure. However, independence doesn't mean lack of accountability. To make SFMTA more accountable to San Franciscans, I would push for more transparency in how decisions are made and how funds are spent. This could include holding regular public forums where residents can provide input and receive updates, and creating clear performance metrics that SFMTA must meet to ensure it is delivering effective services. Additionally, I would encourage better collaboration between SFMTA, the Board of Supervisors, and the Mayor's office to ensure that the agency remains responsive to the city's needs while preserving its operational independence.

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?

Yes, I would work to expedite the creation of new transit-only lanes in San Francisco. Transit-only lanes are essential for improving the speed and reliability of public transportation, reducing congestion, and ensuring that buses and other transit vehicles are not stuck in traffic. This, in turn, saves money that can be reinvested into additional transit services, benefiting everyone. I would prioritize creating transit-only lanes along high-traffic corridors such as Geary Boulevard, Mission Street, and Van Ness Avenue, where delays impact a large number of commuters daily. Additionally, key improvements are needed along Market Street to enhance service for Muni and BART riders. Expanding transit-only lanes in these areas would improve efficiency and reduce travel times. I would also focus on underserved neighborhoods that rely heavily on public transit to ensure equitable access to faster and more reliable service.

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?

To promote high transit ridership across all of San Francisco, I would focus on improving accessibility, frequency, quality, and reliability of service. Expanding Muni routes to better serve outer neighborhoods and increasing bus frequency, particularly during peak hours, would make transit a more convenient option for residents. I would also invest in better infrastructure, such as adding more transit-only lanes and upgrading bus stops to ensure safety and comfort for riders. Additionally, enhancing security measures where needed would make public transit safer and more appealing, helping to boost ridership citywide.

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?

Yes

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?

Yes

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?

No: While the idea of creating more green spaces is appealing, closing the Great Highway during weekdays could significantly inconvenience commuters, leading to longer travel times for those using alternate routes like Lincoln Way and Sunset Boulevard to reach Skyline Boulevard. This may disproportionately impact residents who rely on this route for their daily commutes. No happiness should build on someone else's pain. Having an extra park is good, but it shouldn't come at the cost of significantly disrupting the daily lives and commutes of residents who rely on the Great Highway.

I believe Proposition K is likely to pass, and if I am elected as mayor, I will work on compensating those who are impacted by the closure of the Great Highway. I am deeply committed to ensuring that the needs of every resident are considered and addressed, especially when changes impact their daily lives. My goal is to balance green space creation with minimizing disruptions for those who depend on essential transportation routes.

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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