



## Shahram Shariati - *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?**

Shahram Shariati

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

I have an interview on the main page of my website, [www.SFmayor2025.com](http://www.SFmayor2025.com), where I discuss the Valencia Street center bike lane design. In my May interview, I stated that the media was trying to convince the public that the bike lane was hurting businesses, when, in fact, it wasn't. Two months after my interview, the same media sources that blamed the center bike lane for hurting businesses reported that it was actually the economy impacting Valencia businesses. There are businesses across San Francisco shutting down that do not have a center-running bike lane.

<https://sfstandard.com/2024/06/21/valencia-street-bike-lane-didnt-hurt-businesses-report-finds/>

<https://sfstandard.com/2023/12/08/san-francisco-small-business-protests-valencia-street-bike-lane/>

**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 do not own a vehicle in San Francisco and rely heavily on MUNI buses, trains, and walking to get around the city every day. There are many bike thefts in my building, and I have seen firsthand the unhygienic things people have done with the bikes at the bikeshare stations near my home, which discourages me from biking.

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

Every day.

**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.**

- a. My first top priority would be to replace Jeff Tumlin with a more qualified candidate within the SFMTA. I know three people who would be perfect for the role and are well-respected within the agency.
- b. My second top priority would be to bring back the 47 MUNI route. It was the best way for me to commute to the CalTrain station, and it would work well with the new Van Ness Bus Rapid Transit project. Since the 47 was cut, I use ridesharing whenever I need to go to the CalTrain station because taking MUNI would take twice as long.
- c. The third top priority would be to implement Vision Zero properly. This means following the European model, which uses engineering, education, and enforcement in unison to ensure that roads are safe for everyone. Currently, our elected officials are trying to achieve Vision Zero through engineering alone, but this approach has proven ineffective unless we add speed bumps on every block in San Francisco, which no one wants.
- d. My fourth top priority would be to establish a funding source for businesses that are impacted by transportation-related projects for extended periods of time. I live right next to Van Ness and saw how the Bus Rapid Transit project affected local businesses. The same thing is happening on Taraval right now.
- e. My final top priority would be to waive the taxi medallion fees owed by existing taxi drivers. The taxi drivers were placed in an unfair situation where they are still required to pay for a medallion that has become worthless due to ride-sharing programs that operate for free in the city. This has even led to suicides within the taxi driver community

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 support the principles laid out in the Transit First Policy, but I understand that people do not use public transportation if they feel unsafe or find it inconvenient. I plan to make it safer by having undercover cops ride different MUNI routes 24/7, similar to how Air Marshals operate on planes.

To make cycling safer and more convenient, I would allocate resources to create more sidewalk-level bike lanes. This is beneficial because it separates cyclists from vehicles and pedestrians while also providing the necessary street clearance to meet San Francisco Fire Department (SFFD) standards. Many SF residents are unaware that protected bike lane designs often do not get approved due to SFFD requirements.

To make public transportation more efficient, I would remove street parking on major arterial roads and build more parking garages. This would allow the SFMTA to create more transit lanes without sacrificing parking. Additionally, people would not need to continuously circle around city blocks looking for parking when they can do so within a parking garage, reducing the likelihood of street collisions.

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?

People are not using transit because they feel unsafe. Over my 10 years working at SFMTA, I have heard hundreds of stories from people who feel unsafe taking transit because they were robbed, sexually harassed, witnessed a fight, heard people yelling, saw vandalism, and more. As mentioned in another response, I would ensure that undercover officers are riding different MUNI lines 24/7, similar to how Air Marshals operate on planes.

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?

San Francisco elected officials claim that the city is facing a budget deficit, but this is not true. We actually have a surplus of funds. The real problem is the lack of accountability from our elected officials. San Francisco has a larger budget than Los Angeles and Chicago, despite being a fraction of the size of both cities in terms of population and land mass. My plan is to create a documentary series about San Francisco politics, where every appointed and elected official will be on camera for the entire duration of my term as mayor. This will make everyone accountable and leave people with two choices:

- i. Quit because the media will uncover any illegal or unethical activities they are involved in.
- ii. Do the right thing to maintain their position and have a better chance of being reelected.

This concept will help me audit the city and identify where money is being wasted. It will also allow us to showcase our processes to the world, potentially leading other cities to contact us and collaborate on new and better programs that can save the city money.

San Francisco has made the news over the past two years for spending \$1.7 million on a public bathroom in Noe Valley, \$1.5 million to teach people how to ride a bike or scooter, and \$20,900 on a trash can. These are just a few examples of how poor leadership is abusing taxpayer money. Ask any San Francisco resident if they would spend this kind of money on these items, and you will get a resounding NO!"

<https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/san-francisco-public-toilet-noe-valley-1-7-million/>

<https://sfstandard.com/2024/05/28/san-francisco-transportation-jeff-tumlin-hot-seat/>

<https://missionlocal.org/2022/07/san-francisco-prototype-trash-cans-trial-begins/>

San Francisco currently spends \$713 million per year on homeless programs for 8,000 people. My solution to the homeless problem involves using secondhand cruise ships docked along the bay to house all 8,000 homeless individuals. Cruise ships are essentially floating cities that can provide shelter, food, job training, and medical services. The cost of implementing this idea would be \$300 million per year. This approach could save over \$400 million with just one solution. A similar program was implemented in 1989 after the last major earthquake to help people displaced from

their homes. The program was a major success, and Mayor Agnes wanted to continue it, but the next mayor discontinued the program.

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 believe fares should remain as they are now, with low-income individuals having access to free public transportation through existing programs. To increase revenue for the SFMTA, I would find more fun and innovative ways for the agency to raise money.

- i. I would convert the top floors of SFMTA-owned parking garages into drive-in theaters in the evenings.
- ii. I would make the ROADEO event open to the public year-round, where people can pay a fee to drive a MUNI bus in a private parking lot, navigating an obstacle course made of orange cones. This would make people more empathetic to MUNI bus drivers and could even spark interest in becoming a bus driver.
- iii. Instead of spending \$2.3 billion to build a tunnel that is only 0.6 miles long for CalTrain, I would use that money to build a gondola and zip line connecting Twin Peaks with the Ferry Building. This idea would cost a fraction of the tunnel project and attract tourists from around the world, similar to how the cable car system does now. Even locals who live in Twin Peaks would find it entertaining to use regularly.
- iv. Since I work as an engineer with the SFMTA, I constantly see the agency buying the same products repeatedly for our projects. Instead of continuously purchasing products like steel poles and paint, I would propose forming a partnership with our suppliers. The city could invest in expanding the factory to produce more

finished goods in exchange for receiving our products for free and obtaining a small cut of the sales from the extra supply of goods being sold.

**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?**

San Francisco is fortunate to be only 49 square miles, meaning nearly 100% of people live or work within 2 to 3 blocks of a transit stop. Our current MUNI system is set up in a grid pattern, allowing anyone in SF to travel from point A to point B using one or two lines. We also have programs in place to provide free transportation for those who fall under the low-income bracket. While I believe improvements can be made with Bus Rapid Transit projects and increased frequency of transit services, the biggest deterrent to ridership is that people simply don't feel safe using public transportation.

**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 live a few blocks from City Hall, so I would walk to work every day. I currently walk to work every day since I live directly across the street from the SFMTA Van Ness office. I agree with the policy that elected officials should experience public transportation firsthand to understand what people do or don't like about it. San Francisco could have one of the greatest transportation systems in the world if we had the right elected officials in place.

**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?**

The SFMTA is not separate from the city's electoral politics. Elected officials appoint members of the SFMTA Board, and these members often share the views of the politicians who appointed them. The Director of the SFMTA is appointed by the mayor. I am currently working on the controversial Winston Drive project, where Supervisor Myrna wants the SFMTA to remove all the RV parking where families live

without providing them a safe space to park their vehicles. I had to create a design along Winston Drive that included three bike lanes. No city in San Francisco has three bike lanes, but my SFMTA supervisor told me that's what Supervisor Myrna wants, and we have to comply. I created an alternative design with a two-way, parking-protected bike lane that retained 80% of the RV parking, but my SFMTA supervisor said we cannot implement it.

I was also involved in a project in Supervisor Safai's district, where he wants to use taxpayer money to install a \$250,000 pedestrian signal at the intersection of Sickles and Sears. This location is not on the high-injury network, and there are not enough pedestrians crossing this intersection to justify the cost. The SFMTA sent a memo to Supervisor Safai's office with our professional recommendation, but he vetoed it, so we have to install it. He is also running for mayor and wants to use this project to bolster his campaign by promoting safety infrastructure improvements in his district.

**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?**

I would appoint someone that has as much knowledge as myself since I am in the industry. But I also want someone who is ethical and accountable. Someone who will do what is best for the community and not the politicians.

**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?**

As mentioned in one of my other answers I would remove street parking at locations with high commercial spaces and install a transit only lane in that area. The street parking would be moved to a new local parking garage. The 24 Divisadero route would be perfect for this.

**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?**

Ridership is associated with density. The outer western and southeastern neighborhoods are some of the least dense areas of San Francisco, which is why transit

ridership remains low. Residents in these neighborhoods often have access to private parking spaces in their garages or driveways. Data has shown that public transportation is most effective in dense neighborhoods, so to increase ridership in these two areas, the population density would need to be increased.

### 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?

Yes, to Great Highway being open to cars at all times.

No, to JFK Promenade opening to cars on weekdays.

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?

Uncertain as I gave the example of the \$2.3 billion set aside for CalTrain to tunnel 0.6 miles where that money could be put to better transportation projects in SF. It depends on the project and the pros and cons.

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 because there is already a beach and Golden Gate Park adjacent to the Great Highway for pedestrians. Plus, sand continuously blows onto the street and needs to be plowed. How can a park thrive if it is constantly being covered in sand?

*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.*



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