



San Francisco Transit Riders

Strategic Plan 2026–2029

Fighting for a Rider-First City



Our Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission

SF Transit Riders is a rider-centered organization that advocates to make public transit the first choice for getting around San Francisco.

Vision

We envision a system that is responsive to transit rider feedback and plans improvements with rider needs in mind. We envision a system and city officials who are open and willing to collaborate on efforts to build a pro-transit culture in San Francisco. We work to build a transit system that leaves no one out, and addresses the perceptions and experience from historically unserved and underserved communities of being sidelined from transit policy conversations for decades. Overall, we envision a world where transit riders come first, and policy is based on riders' needs.

Values

- **We value rider-centered policies.** We listen to riders; we lead with riders. We believe that regular transit riders have access to knowledge and experience that can shape the development of advocacy and policy positions that lead to concrete transit improvements.
- **We value the pro-transit voice.** We believe in the positive impact and potential of public transit. While there are many problems and challenges affecting public transit, we focus on solutions that strengthen and expand public transit.

- **We value equity.** We believe in improving transit for everyone getting around San Francisco and the Bay Area. To get there, we apply both universal and targeted strategies that attend to the outsized service and access needs for historically unserved and underserved communities.¹
- **We value a visionary approach to planning.** We support thriving public transit that is innovative, inspirational, and growing.
- **We value sustainability.** We believe in the environmental, economic, and health benefits of living in active, walkable, transit-rich communities. Public transit is the most sustainable way for people to get around in a dense city. It promotes a vibrant economy and invests in the social good.
- **We value respect.** We respect members, riders, and partners, even when we disagree. We exemplify and teach having empathy for others, and we acknowledge riders' dignity.
- **We value practicality.** We seek short-term pragmatic solutions while advocating for a long-term vision. We demand accountability from our agencies and leaders.

These communities include, but are not limited to, low-income households; Black, Indigenous, and people of color; immigrants and undocumented residents; people with disabilities; elderly individuals; children and youth; unhoused people; transit-dependent riders; and those living in neighborhoods that have faced decades of disinvestment and displacement.

¹[Targeted universalism](#) is a policy framework, developed by the UC Berkeley Othering & Belonging Institute under the leadership of John A. Powell, that sets a shared universal goal for all people while using targeted strategies to address the different barriers faced by specific groups. Rather than treating everyone the same, it recognizes that achieving equitable outcomes requires tailored approaches so that all groups can reach the common goal.

Core Strengths & Challenges

Core Strengths

1. Rider-Centric Framing

- Deep understanding of how riders navigate San Francisco's complex, interconnected transit networks and agencies, grounded in everyday rider experience
- Strong connection to the lived experience of transit riders, especially where frequency and reliability gaps have the greatest impact
- Focus on everyday rider impacts as surfaced in survey data, especially frequency, reliability, and speed
- Ability to harness rider data and community voices to hold policymakers accountable to service and equity promises
- Commitment to celebrating transit rider enthusiasm and transit success stories, building civic pride, strengthening ridership culture, and spreading public awareness of the importance of transit

2. Credibility and Policy Expertise

- Deep transit policy knowledge
- Strong understanding of funding mechanisms
- Data-driven advocacy capacity
- Trusted by agencies

3. Strong Agency Relationships

- Access to insiders
- Ability to partner on solutions
- Widely regarded as serious and informed
- Capacity to influence behind the scenes

4. Track Record of Tangible Wins

- Demonstrates effectiveness
- Builds credibility with members and funders
- Shows ability to move from analysis to impact

5. Committed, Mission-Driven People

- Belief in change
- Pride in the work
- Strong relationships among staff and board

6. Alignment on the Top (But Not the Only) Advocacy Priority

Stable transit funding is the top issue as of the writing of this plan in 2025–26, and even if the 2026 ballot measures pass, given larger trends in U.S. public policy regarding transportation, transit funding is likely to continue to be a perennial issue in the Bay Area for the foreseeable future.

Challenges

1. Fiscal constraints: ability to enact agenda is limited if transit agencies do not receive additional funding from public sources.
2. Declining support from private funders.
3. Lack of clarity and alignment on roles and responsibilities for Board, ED and members.
4. Lack of clarity and focus on political agenda (i.e. regional or local focus) and process for determining policy agenda.
5. “Credibility”: SFTR will need to proactively maintain its position, especially as an increase in transit (and transit-adjacent) advocacy groups emerge.
6. Divergent interests from members: involvement in policy vs. building social connections and learning new skills.
7. Members do not represent historically unserved or underserved populations.

Strategic Priorities

Priority 1: Funding for Public Transit

San Francisco's public transit can only succeed with access to stable and robust funding sources. In 2026 advocates led efforts to stabilize Bay Area transit agencies' unsustainable budget deficits, which were considerably impacted by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Two transit funding ballot measures have been placed on the November 2026 ballot through signature-gathering efforts. The Connect Bay Area Transit Initiative in San Francisco, San Mateo, Contra Costa, Alameda, and Santa Clara counties is regional in scope, levying a 1% sales tax in San Francisco and 0.5% in the other four counties. The measure will provide funds for transit agencies in all five counties, including Muni, CalTrain, BART, AC Transit, SamTrans and VTA. The Stronger Muni for All measure in San Francisco will provide additional funding for Muni, and is a progressively tiered parcel tax on commercial and residential properties.

In year 1 of this Strategic Plan, to November 2026, SFTR will continue working to influence the passage of these two local and regional ballot measures. However, SFTR's exact work plans to advance the priority of public transit funding will depend on whether both measures succeed at the ballot. Therefore, this plan lays out two alternatives for work priorities in Years 2 and 3 depending on the outcomes of the election; one if the measures pass and one if either or both of the measures fail.

Three-Year Outcome: SFTR will work to influence the passage of both ballot measures in 2026. In the following two years:

If both measures pass, SFTR will advocate for additional funding in Years 2 and 3 to enable system expansion, service increases, and other high-level service improvements that would be transformative for the system. SFTR predicts that the ballot measures will be sufficient only to address the SFMTA's budget deficit and stabilize its financial situation, without the possibility of service expansions. This will leave Muni, and Bay Area transit riders, with a system that provides less overall service in 2027 than it did in 2019. SFTR believes that Muni must still aim to provide even more and better service than it did prior to the pandemic. Additional funding will have to be secured to advance system expansion, service increases, and other service improvements.

If one measure fails or both measures fail, SFTR's work in Years 2 and 3 will concentrate on urgently developing alternative strategies to secure funds to maintain service and sustain the smallest possible loss of service. The consequences for Muni service if the ballot measures fail are dire: the agency may be forced to cut dozens of routes and slash overall service by an amount approaching 50 percent.

Primary Strategies:

Year 1 (to November 2026):

- Lead advocacy efforts including campaigns, stakeholder engagement, member efforts, and public mobilization.
- Provide public testimony, coalition leadership, or bill sponsorship engagement.
- Develop and offer educational presentations to different stakeholders in the community (i.e., neighborhood associations, merchant associations, political clubs) to explain the contours of the regional and local tax measures with the goal of turning out the vote.

Years 2-3 (if ballot measures pass):

- Work with the SFMTA to develop budget predictions and scenarios allowing for possible service improvements as ballot measure funds become available.
- Identify new opportunities for SFMTA to raise revenue or cut expenses. A non-exhaustive list of possible opportunities:
 - Expansion of parking meters and hours;
 - Expansion of residential parking program;
 - Pursue efficiencies in cable car management and operations, and pursue options for supplemental external funding of cable car operations.
- Explore new revenue streams and opportunities at the federal, state and regional level.

Years 2-3 (if one or both measures fail):

- Advise the SFMTA on service cut proposals and scenarios;
- Identify new opportunities for SFMTA to raise revenue (see above);
- Identify operational efficiencies or savings, possibly by leveraging Muni Forward proposals.
- Explore new revenue streams and opportunities at the federal, state, and regional level.

Who is Accountable

Staff: Policy Manager and Executive Director

Board: Policy & Endorsement Committee

Priority 2: Improve Service Reliability and Frequency

Transit riders, when asked what improvements they want to see, routinely rank improved service reliability and greater frequency on transit routes as their top priorities. SFTR's members, when polled, also identified frequency and reliability as their top concerns. We define reliability as even spacing between vehicles, with less bunching and fewer vehicles being delayed or taken out of service; and frequency as the number vehicles traveling along a route, with shorter intervals between vehicles as their number is increased.

SFTR is reviving its 2019 concept of "30 x 30" to support its vision of what the San Francisco transit system could look like as a generation of transformational reliability and frequency improvements. 30 x 30 is a vision of a Muni system sufficiently strengthened to permit anyone to travel anywhere in San Francisco via public transit in 30 minutes by the year 2030. While this is primarily intended to serve as a visionary and aspirational goal, it embodies the kind of network investments and improvement in systemwide mobility that animate SFTR's advocacy.

To advance its 30 x 30 vision, SFTR will engage in advocacy work with the SFMTA that focuses on at least three priority projects within the Muni system that address reliability problems or insufficient service provision. This work will be done in concert with continuing our ongoing advocacy on a number of identified routes. The priority projects could include service restorations as appropriate, consistent with altered travel patterns; may overlap with existing SFTMA projects; or be independent.

Three Year Outcome: By June 2029, identify and achieve statistically significant improvements on three priority projects within the Muni system that will address chronic delay or allow for more frequent service.

Primary Strategies:

- Advocate for implementation of a 29R Sunset Rapid by the year 2030.
- Identify and begin advocacy work on at least 2 additional priority projects. A non-exhaustive list of possible opportunities:
 - Restoration of lines suspended in 2020;
 - Reversal of frequency cuts enacted since 2020;
 - Reversal of span cuts since 2020, particularly in late evenings;
 - Engagement on behalf of suspended or unfunded Muni Forward projects;
 - Support a priority campaign to improve T Third service speed and reliability to approach original service goals;
 - Support campaigns on behalf of specific routes (i.e., high ridership routes, critical links in Equity Priority Areas, etc.)
- Support ongoing SFMTA line improvement projects, including the I California Street Transit and Safety Project, the 29 Sunset Improvement Project, and the K Ingleside Rapid Project.
- Continue advocacy to reduce impact of the planned service disruptions to the T Third line due to rebuilding of the Islais Street Bridge.
- As the SFMTA launches future line improvement efforts, support and publicize those efforts.

Who is Accountable

Staff: Policy Manager and Executive Director

Board: Policy & Endorsement Committee

Priority 3: Equity-Focused Transit Policy

Equity is a key value for SFTR that functions as an overarching lens shaping how SFTR budgets, plans, and makes decisions across all its priority areas, including Priority 1 (funding for transit) and Priority 2 (service improvements). But we also include it here as its own individual priority, in order to pursue specific advocacy in the next three years on at least one targeted public policy that advances equity in the Muni system.²

Possible examples of equity-focused policies that SFTR could prioritize include:

- Fare reductions;
- Improvements to and expansion of fare discount programs;
- Leveraging impacts from capital improvement projects;
- Dedicated service improvements on routes that serve designated SFMTA Equity Priority Areas.

Three Year Outcome: By June 2029, SFTR will advance at least one priority equity-focused transit policy that reduces transit barriers for historically unserved and underserved communities.

Primary Strategies:

- Build on the existing community organizing work SFTR has begun in the Bayview, Excelsior, Visitacion Valley and Western Addition, centering community based objectives for more transit access.
- Conduct analysis of at least 3 policy options (e.g., fare capping, transfer reform, youth/senior fare structures, further discounts), including equity impact and feasibility.
- Engage at least 2 community-based organizations that represent historically underserved communities to inform policy selection.
- Identify and secure formal alignment from at least 5 key partners or coalition members to commit to participation in the Transit Justice Coalition.

²The SFMTA currently recognizes the following nine [Equity Priority Areas](#): 1. Chinatown 2. Western Addition 3. Tenderloin/SoMa 4. Inner Mission 5. Excelsior/Outer Mission 6. Oceanview/Ingleside 7. Visitacion Valley 8. Bayview 9. Treasure Island

- Publish and adopt a clear policy platform and advocacy strategy endorsed by the Board.
- Demonstrate measurable improvements in transit access for priority populations.
- Play a leading or co-leading role in a coalition of at least 5 partners within the Transit Justice Coalition, including sustained engagement of impacted riders.

Who is Accountable

Staff: Outreach & Organizing Manager and Executive Director

Board: As SFTR is on the steering committee of the Transit Justice Coalition, the board's Policy and Endorsement Committee will make a recommendation to the board about supporting the equity policy and advocacy platform within the Transit Justice Coalition.

Priority 4: Fundraising, Infrastructure, and Membership Development

Three Year Outcome: Increase SFTR budget by 5% in 2026, 15% in 2027, and 25% in 2028.

Primarily, these budget increases will allow for 1) hiring a new Development Director, freeing up the Executive Director for organizational management; and 2) securing dedicated office space.

Primary Strategies:

- Executive Director develops a Fund Development Plan, outlining existing grants, possible new sources of funding, and identifying where support is needed from the Fundraising and Membership Committee to implement.
- Increase membership headcount by 25% each year.
- Implement the revised membership dues structure SFTR has already studied.
- Focus on three primary fundraising events each year:
 - One high end/high ticket “fancy” event;
 - One “picnic”; and
 - One “Members Preview” of the advocacy agenda, with special focus on member opportunities to get more involved.
- Continue to co-host Transit Month each year.
- Offer casual meet-ups every other month hosted by Board members to build social connections.
- Raise funding in year 1 to hire a Development Director (part or full time) who can continue to expand sources of funding and reach year 2 and 3 desired outcomes.

- Establish a physical office presence.
- Investigate formation of a parallel 501(c)(4) organization to determine whether its formation will further the goals of this strategic plan, particularly with respect to lobbying limits and advocacy activities disallowed by SFTR's 501(c)(3) status.

Who is Accountable

Staff: Executive Director

Board: Fundraising and Membership Committee

Executive Director

Sara Johnson

Board Members

Mark Sawchuk, Chair
Thea Selby, Co-Vice Chair
Steve Pepple, Co-Vice Chair
Peter Straus, Secretary
Mike Artukovich, Treasurer
Dominique Monié
Natasha Opfell
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