

## San Francisco Transit Effectiveness Project (SFTEP)

### SUMMARY

SFTEP Policy Advisory Group – September 13, 2006 Meeting

City Hall, Room 278

#### **Participants:**

##### ***PAG Members***

Wil Din, MTA Board of Directors  
Steve Ferrario, MTA CAC (for Dan Murphy)  
Nathaniel Ford, MTA  
Ed Harrington, Controller's Office  
Steve Heminger, MTC  
Boe Hayward (for Bevin Dufty, SF Board of Supervisors)  
Kevin Hughes, IBEW, Local 6  
Steve Kawa, Mayor's Office  
Peter Mezey, MTA Board of Directors  
Jose Luis Moscovich, SFTCA  
Tom Radulovich, TEP CAC

##### ***MTA Staff***

William Lieberman  
Ross Maxwell  
Peter Straus

##### ***Controller's Office Staff***

Sally Allen  
Liz Garcia  
Peg Stevenson

##### ***TEP Consultant Team***

Russ Chisholm, TMD  
Bonnie Nelson, Nelson Nygaard  
Jay Primus, Nelson Nygaard

#### **Meeting Overview:**

This document summarizes the fourth meeting of the SFTEP Policy Advisory Group (PAG). The PAG is one of three advisory bodies established to provide input, review, and policy-level guidance during the Transit Effectiveness Project (TEP). The PAG will be meeting throughout the TEP.

Eleven PAG members, as well as staff from the MTA, the Controller's Office, and the TEP consultant team attended this two-hour meeting. This was a third and final meeting of the PAG focused on the visioning process. The goals of this process are to: refine a vision for Muni, determine characteristics of a Muni system that will help it achieve that vision, determine measures of success for the TEP, and identify policies that will need to be reviewed to achieve the vision.

#### **Project Status Report:**

MTA Planning Director William Lieberman opened the meeting. He reviewed the status of the project's key tasks, reporting that:

- Task 1. Vision statement nearly finished – being submitted to MTA Board for October 17 hearing.
- Task 2. The best practices analysis should be finished by end of September.
- Task 3. All market research surveys have been completed. Analysis of travel demand expected to be finished by end of October.
- Task 4. Automatic Passenger Counters (APCs) are being installed on 110 rubber-tired vehicles to collect necessary data for all bus routes for service analysis. Muni traffic checkers will focus on rail lines (F, J, K, L, M, and N). Data should be complete by end of January 2007.
- Task 5. Operations review should be completed by end of October.
- Task 6. Draft Early Action Plan will be ready by the end of September.
- Task 8. Preliminary draft of cost allocation model is being developed this month.

The following comments (**C:**) and responses (**R:**) were raised during the review of the project status.

**C:** Project status should be presented as a Gantt chart to make project status, deadlines, and phasing easier to understand.

**C:** There should be a passenger counting hiatus in December to avoid anomalous holiday-period data coloring the analysis. **R:** This hiatus is planned.

### **Visioning:**

Bonnie Nelson led a discussion of each section of the TEP vision document as it stood after the September 6th TEP CAC meeting.

### ***Vision***

**C:** The tense of the language of the first bullet of the vision should be changed to the present tense (i.e., change “create” to “be”) to match the rest of the bullet statements. This will also reinforce the fact that Muni is already an attractive service that provides a large percentage of trips in the City. This bullet should not give the impression that the TEP or Muni is starting from scratch.

**C:** Using “Muni is” rather than “Muni will be” would make these statements more affirmative.

**C:** Reducing car use is more important than reducing car ownership. A dissenting comment was made to say that San Francisco’s unique geography makes an emphasis on reducing car ownership appropriate in this vision statement because fewer cars in San Francisco would reduce the demand for parking and thereby improve quality of life.

**C:** Must make sure that we use the more global word “transit” instead of “Muni” in the appropriate places. Be consistent throughout the document to avoid confusion.

## ***Muni System Characteristics***

Bonnie Nelson led the group through review of the priority service characteristics.

**C:** Safety and security should be moved to the list of highest priority characteristics. These are related not just to public safety concerns (e.g., terrorist threats), but also to day-to-day crimes against riders and vehicles, the perception of personal security when using Muni, and the safety of pedestrians, Muni employees, and Muni riders.

**C:** It is not clear from the document if these are the areas where Muni needs the most improvement or are just important aspects of service.

## ***Measures of Success***

Bonnie Nelson led the group through review of the measures that will be used to evaluate the success of the TEP.

**C:** The groups of measures should be reordered with measures of financial sustainability listed after service delivery and customer experience measures.

**C:** There need to be more measures of speed, but these measures need to remain useable, easy to measure, and easy to understand. Overall trip time is what really matters to riders and non-riders. In-vehicle travel time (determined by average vehicle speeds) is an important part of overall trip times, but so are service frequency, walk access times, transfers, and reliability of service (i.e., the difference between a customer's expected wait time and the actual wait time). Perhaps speed could be measured using a composite of service frequency and average vehicle speed.

**C:** Financial sustainability measures should also consider the impact of fare evasion.

**C:** Geographic access needs to take into account topography (i.e., stops that look close together on a map may, in reality, be farther apart due to hills, etc.).

**C:** Geographic coverage should be weighted for density so that areas of the City with low population densities are not over served by transit at the expense of high density areas/corridors that need more service.

**C:** TEP is an opportunity to look at many possible ways to meeting transportation needs (e.g., vans, shared taxis, etc.) as well as an opportunity to look at disabled access issues. **R:** Access in this sense (for people with disabilities) is not the emphasis of the TEP, but ADA does provide guidance and the TEP will look for opportunities to improve access.

**C:** In TEP, Muni should be looking at overall picture of not just Muni, but also the related demands and costs of paratransit, street management, and accessibility. To not do so globally and strategically as part of the TEP would be a lost opportunity.

**C:** Financial sustainability should emphasize cost efficiency rather than cost effectiveness. Muni is already quite cost effective when compared to other Bay Area transit operators.

**C:** To more effectively measure customer satisfaction, BART does regression analysis of 26 factors that contribute to satisfaction. If the sample size is large enough, the TEP should do the same with its market research.

**C:** Should add as a measure the percentage of disabled riders that used fixed route service. This effectively links accessibility with Muni's larger financial picture (including paratransit services).

**C:** The TEP does present many opportunities, but there is a danger of making it too big and unwieldy.

### ***Policies Areas to be Reviewed***

Bonnie Nelson led the group through review of the policy areas that have been raised as concerns by the advisory groups and, to the extent they have a bearing on Muni, will be considered by the TEP study.

**C:** Another policy area should be added that focuses on ongoing communication with MTA employees, not just customers. Muni should increase its transparency as an employer, not just as an agency.

### **Discussion of Key Tradeoffs:**

Bonnie Nelson led a discussion of some of the key tradeoffs that the TEP will have to address, as well as a summary of the results of the CAC dot exercise used to solicit CAC members' input regarding the tradeoffs.

#### *Tradeoff 1: Focus on dependent or discretionary riders*

**C:** If Muni were to become so attractive that it attracted discretionary riders, it would definitely attract dependent riders.

**C:** Muni cannot treat dependent riders as a captive population.

**C:** If Muni can attract a higher ridership across more of the population, it will have a larger constituency which can be helpful for increasing public support for transit improvements.

**C:** Muni should not just focus on discretionary riders.

**C:** This does not have to be a zero sum game. For example, higher fares can be charged for premium services, which are not necessarily only for discretionary riders.

**C:** Whether or not there were to be a premium service, Muni must ensure that the quality of service and customer experience on its standard service offering is really good. Only then can

you define what premium service would look like – it cannot take the place of the improvement that needs to happen to all Muni service.

**C:** Transit is supposed to serve the customer. The statistically valid customer survey will reveal a lot about customer preferences. This CAC info is not statistically valid and may not reflect the concerns or sentiments of riders (and non-riders) at large.

**C:** Focus should be on high ridership routes.

*Tradeoff 2: Focus investment on all corridors or on key corridors*

**C:** Though the CAC has shown a preference for key corridors, the opposite is usually what happens when resources become limited – service on key corridors is often cut first.

**C:** The language of the first choice would be more accurate if it read “diffuse investment on all corridors.”

**C:** Improving service delivery and management on key corridors will help; investments do not have to mean just adding more vehicles.

**C:** There may be an opportunity to do both to some degree by exploring other types of services (e.g., dial a ride).

*Tradeoff 3: Maintain the transit grid or have more service frequency on high demand routes*

**C:** The small sample size of the CAC results is not enough to reach a conclusion here – the market research will be more valuable, more significant, and less political.

**C:** If we want to grow Muni ridership, we must listen to what non-riders want as well.

*Tradeoff 4: More service during off hours or concentrate service on high use times/routes*

**C:** Tradeoffs #2, #3, and #4 are all related to land use. The TEP needs to be related to land use choices.

**C:** Having service that is useful 24 hours a day and 7 days a week is one way to reduce car ownership.

*Tradeoff 5: Close route spacing or more limited/express routes*

**C:** Additional service frequency and reliability on core bus corridors will help them have the same perceived dependability as rail. If more distance between routes is necessary to achieve this, that’s acceptable because people will walk longer distances (5 to 6 blocks) to access this type of high quality service.

**C:** Muni should invest in its core corridors to make sure that they have high speeds, frequency, and reliability. This will require both capital and operational investment. This way it could clarify what its trunk routes are.

*Tradeoff 6: Close stop spacing or lower in-vehicle travel time*

**C:** Studies show that although there are many strategies to increase transit speeds, adjusting stop spacing is the lowest cost and highest impact way to increase speed.

**C:** Service speed is important regardless of economic class; BART analysis of rider preferences has shown that low income individuals value low travel times just as much if not more than those with higher incomes.

**C:** Stop spacing is the most crucial tradeoff of all – it is at the heart of Muni’s financial and operational efficiency.

**C:** More information about what the specific concrete tradeoffs will be would make this tradeoff easier to understand and evaluate.

*Tradeoff 7: Emphasize new modes/types of service or current modes*

**C:** Muni must take this opportunity to look at different types/modes of service.

*Tradeoff 8: Low fares for all or increasing/premium fares*

**C:** Increasing fares with inflation raises social equity issues.

**C:** Creating premium public services creates the risk of increasing social divisions or creating services only for a certain class of people. Muni is one place that San Franciscans have a shared experience. That experience should be improved for everyone.

**C:** An analogous real world example is high occupancy toll lanes on freeways – the income profile of people who use those lanes is quite varied; they are not, as feared, just “Lexus lanes” that increase the convenience of high income people at the expense of everyone else. Premium fares for premium service may simply provide people with another choice.

**C:** BART has high fares. They help it look good from a financial perspective, but also lower ridership. BART could capture more trips than it does currently if its fares were lower.

**C:** Muni should not lose sight of its larger public policy goals – fare policy should help you achieve those larger goals.

## **Brainstorming Early Action Candidates:**

Russ Chisholm discussed the objectives of the Early Action Plan and the implementation timeframe. Policy Advisory Group members were then asked to suggest one or two ideas for early action items. What follows is a list of potential ideas:

- Develop and implement more Transit Preferential Streets projects (similar to the Inner Geary/O'Farrell project) on heavily used routes. These have a 1 to 2 year return on investment.
- Improve traffic enforcement on key corridors.
- Add more 38 express service.
- Add more locations where fares are collected off the vehicle.
- A fare free zone in the congested downtown. It costs more in delays to gather fares than Muni gains in fare revenue.
- Improve maintenance of vehicles so that Muni has enough vehicles for peak pull out.
- Analyze industry standards for maintenance, spare ratios, and vehicle availability. Determine what is the industry standard, what is desirable, and what is actually accomplished.
- Improve maintenance of rail vehicles (light rail vehicles and historic rail vehicles) so that Muni can achieve peak pull out. This will be even more critical when 3<sup>rd</sup> Street is operational.
- Allow cable car transfers.
- Accelerate the implementation of NextBus.
- Utilize NextBus signage more effectively to key riders up to date on service disruptions.
- Increase the efficiency of the F-Line. Reducing the overcrowded conditions will improve fare collection on this route.
- Deputize the Parking Control Officers so that they can enforce transit-only lanes.
- Install more NextBus signs at bus stops, not rail, because buses have lower perceived reliability.
- Universalize proof of payment and be aggressive about implementing it on the entire system.
- Install cameras on buses to enforce double parking and parking in bus lane violations.
- Increase the amount of on-street supervision to improve reliability.