

SAVE MUNI

August 15, 2019

Gwyneth Borden and Ed Harrington, Co-Chairs
Muni Reliability Working Group (via email to maura.lane@sfgov.org)

Dear Co-Chairs Borden and Harrington and Members,

Save Muni is the only truly independent transit advocacy group in San Francisco. We meet monthly, take informed positions on key transit and transportation issues, and communicate regularly with City leaders to influence operations, policy, and governance of the city's transportation systems.

Three Save Muni members attended the first gathering of the Working Group on July 26, 2019. While we were surprised and disappointed not to have been included as a member of the Working Group we do intend to continue attending and participating in ways that will inform the discussion.

Based upon our observation of the July 26th meeting, Save Muni offers the following suggestions for the Working Group's future direction.

1. We agree that transit operations, technology enhancements, capital projects, governance structure and external conditions affecting transit operations ought to be thoroughly and carefully analyzed. Included should be a robust discussion of better and more productive relations between the SFMTA, the MTC, Caltrans and other transit systems operating in San Francisco.
2. **A driver shortage has seriously affected Muni's ability to provide consistently on-time service. Measures taken to date to resolve this problem have fallen short. Vigorous new measures to recruit operators along with targeted service reallocation and rescheduling ought to be taken to alleviate the current difficulties.**
3. Chronic problems result from weak and inconsistent street supervision, poor internal communication, and a lack of commitment to staff training and development. A well organized and managed cadre of street supervisors has long been needed to improve service management. And, staff development and training deserves a much higher priority than it now receives.
4. **We think that the only viable way to increase capacity and reliability of the Muni Metro subway is to increase the length and reduce the number of trains. In the short term, peak period carrying capacity could be substantially increased by train control improvements, proactive line management and supervision at the portals. But only a return to inline coupling at the two westerly portals can allow longer trains to operate in the subway. For this to work properly the inbound LRVs need to operate with precision, which in turn requires the elimination of operating bottlenecks at Saint Francis Circle, West Portal, Duboce Portal, Embarcadero Station and 4th and King.**
5. On several recent occasions Save Muni objected to flaws in the new Siemens cars that could have been, and should have been, identified and eliminated during procurement. New vehicle purchases, especially rail, are infrequent and bad selection choices lead directly to operating and maintenance difficulties throughout the life of the fleet. Prior to accepting any further Siemens cars, a substantial effort should be made to correct all defects. In fact Save Muni requested detailed purchase specifications for the new LRVs and the history of testing vehicles for coupling. Our requests have been ignored, even though they were made under the California

Public Records Act. We believe this is essential information that the Working Group should receive.

6. **In recent years vehicle, track and overhead wire maintenance have not been given the high priority they deserve. We believe that a “State of Good Repair” for facility, fleet and infrastructure, as defined by the FTA, should be prioritized and pursued in a determined manner, even if it means delaying other projects. A much greater effort should be made to get the right maintenance management team in place and hold their leaders fully accountable for results.**
7. In recent years the SFMTA has tended to ignore its existing assets and subordinate its most pressing infrastructure needs to make way for often poorly thought out capital projects. Given the many adverse events of the last few years, it is clear that the Agency has been trying to advance and promote far more projects than it has the management capacity to deliver.
8. **We are convinced that some major organizational changes need to be made at the SFMTA. There are now at least 10 people reporting to the Director of Transportation We believe that the number of subordinates reporting directly to the Director of Transportation should be reduced to no more than 5, and that the General Manager of the Muni should be supported by 5 separate divisions: 1) Transit Operations, 2) Car, Wayside and Facilities Maintenance, 3) Capital Projects and Procurement, 4) Muni Budget and Financial Management and 5) Training. Each Division should have a Chief who, with immediate subordinates, should be held fully accountable for Division performance.**
9. It appears that Proposition E (1999) and Proposition A (2007) went too far in insulating the SFMTA from outside influence. The Working Group should look for ways to re-establish some of the authority the Board of Supervisors used to have over San Francisco's transportation system, perhaps by subjecting the MTA to the budget process that applies to all other City departments, limiting the terms of the MTA Board members to two years and/or empowering the Board of Supervisors to select some members of the MTA Board

We appreciate your consideration of our suggestions. We are prepared to provide public comment or meet with the Working Group to elaborate on these ideas.

Save Muni looks forward to continuing discussions over the best ways to improve the structure and the performance of Muni and the SFMTA.

Sincerely,

Bob Feinbaum
President, Save Muni

cc: Mayor London Breed
Supervisors Rafael Mandelman and Aaron Peskin
Members of the MTA Board
Tom Maguire, Acting Director, SFMTA

