



SAN FRANCISCO
MUNICIPAL TRANSPORTATION AGENCY
CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL

MINUTES

September 3, 2020

WATCH: (link can be found online at <https://www.sfmta.com/calendar/citizens-advisory-council-cac-regular-meeting-september-3-2020>)

PUBLIC COMMENT CALL-IN: (415) 646-2800 | Conference ID: 681238

REGULAR MEETING
5:30 P.M.

COUNCIL MEMBERS
Neil Ballard (Chair), Frank Zepeda (Vice Chair),
Michael Chen, Queena Chen, Steve Cornell, Aaron Leifer, John Lisovsky, Christopher Man,
Daniel Murphy, Karim Salgado, Susan Vaughan, Dorris Vincent, and Daniel Weaver

COUNCIL LIAISON
Roberta Boomer

COUNCIL SECRETARY
Keka Robinson-Luqman

Due to the COVID-19 health emergency and to protect our Council Members, SFMTA staff, and members of the public, the SFMTA Meeting Room (Union Square Conference Room) is closed.

Members of the public are encouraged to participate remotely. If you want to ensure your comment on any item on the agenda is received by the Council in advance of the meeting, please send an email to CAC@sfmta.com by 5pm on Wednesday, September 2nd or call (415) 646-2388.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Call to Order

Chair Ballard called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

CAC members present at Roll Call: Neil Ballard, Aaron Leifer, John Lisovsky, Christopher Man, Daniel Murphy, Karim Salgado, Susan Vaughan, and Frank Zepeda

CAC members absent at Roll Call: Michael Chen, Stephen Cornell, Dorris Vincent, and Daniel Weaver

CAC members absent with notification: Queena Chen

3. Announcement of prohibition of sound producing devices during the meeting.

No announcement was made.

4. Approval of Minutes:

PUBLIC COMMENT:

David Pilpel requested to add non-substantive, grammatical changes to the minutes.

On motion to approve the minutes of August 6, 2020:

ADOPTED: AYES – Neil Ballard, Michael Chen, Aaron Leifer, John Lisovsky, Christopher Man, Daniel Murphy, Karim Salgado, Susan Vaughan, and Frank Zepeda

ABSENT – Queena Chen, Stephen Cornell, Dorris Vincent, and Daniel Weaver

5. Report of the Chair (For discussion only)

Chair Ballard reported that he is keeping the public comment time limit at two minutes. He also made a statement about the reopening and subsequent closing of Muni Metro:

In the month since the CAC last met, Muni Metro service returned in a fashion that could at best be called disappointing. We all cautiously waited to see whether the return of rail service would be successful under its new proposed configuration, but the streetcars were only back for a couple of days before being replaced by buses. We now know that rail will not return until the beginning of next year at the earliest.

Two causes were given for the rollback of rail service: the mechanical failure of overhead wire splices, and a case of COVID-19 in central control.

In the case of the overhead wire splices, we were told that the agency was taking

advantage of an unprecedented five-month tunnel shutdown to perform work to improve the system. That work clearly lacked sufficient or effective overhead wire maintenance. In the case of central control, we cannot rely on just a small handful of employees to perform the critical task of train control.

The fact that riders will go without rail service for nearly a year (and possibly longer) is a major failure that cannot be excused solely by this pandemic. SFMTA leadership must take responsibility for the root causes behind these problems. Taking responsibility, in this case, needs to mean stewarding the agency to a place of resiliency to avoid these critical equipment and management failures in the future. If problems like the ones we saw this past month persist, it will be to the detriment of the riders who rely on Muni for their everyday transportation, and to the future of the SFMTA itself.

After making his statement, Chair Ballard introduced newly appointed Director Sharon Lai.

Director Lai stated that she has a background in Urban Planning from both the government side and the private sector side. For the past three years she has been a board member of the Treasure Island Development Authority where she sat on the Infrastructure and Transportation subcommittee. Transportation and land use policy has always been a passion of hers and is what she studied in school. Her areas of focus are primarily equity in allocating resources for people who depend on the system, outreach and community relationships, and rider and pedestrian safety.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Edward Mason welcomed Director Lai. He recommended periodic board meetings between the planning department, the county transportation authority, and the SFMTA board to evaluate and fully understand the impact that growth will have on transportation. Developments should fully require the transportation impact fees. He inquired what the impact of the hub along South Van Ness Avenue between Mission and Market streets will be on the environment and Muni.

David Pilpel welcomed Director Lai. He appreciated and agreed with the comments that Chair Ballard made about the awkward reintroduction of rail service. He hopes that staff will take great care the next time they try it.

6. Public Comment:

Tom Barton inquired about the number 48 Quintara line and the decision to reroute the bus. He was happy it was being brought back until he heard of the reroute. He wants to know why the decision was made to reroute the line and when it will be back to normal.

Edward Mason commented on the J Church bus service. There seems to be bunching and gapping of the buses. There needs to be better management to space the buses out.

REGULAR CALENDAR

7. Presentation, discussion, and possible action regarding the Geary Bus Rapid Transit Project. (Liz Brisson, Project Manager. Explanatory documents include a slide presentation.)

Liz Brisson, Project Manager, discussed goals, major features, and the current status of the project.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Tom Barton asked what the plan is if a bus breaks down because there will only be two lanes, one inbound and one outbound.

Ken Koblenzer stated that Richmond District residents are concerned about the center running bus lanes which will cause a loss of stops, elimination of all left turns, and a loss of trees. He inquired if it is possible that the plan can be changed to eliminate the center running bus lanes.

David Pilpel requested that the revised version of the presentation be posted online, as it varied slightly from the one currently posted. He asked which environmental document the Geary TETL element is relying on.

Edward Mason asked if the project will be rail ready. He assumed that there would be no platforms in the center for left side boarding. Geary Boulevard is occupied by casino buses and the SFMTA has taken no action on those buses. If casino buses are allowed to clog up the bus only lanes, the SFMTA is just asking for trouble.

Pete Wilson stated that the wooden platforms are too short for the 49 Van Ness line buses. He requested that the wooden platforms on Geary be made long enough so that all three doors are accessible, and people aren't stepping out into the street.

CAC MOTION 200903.01

The SFMTA CAC supports the Geary Bus Rapid Transit project as presented, and especially encourages the SFMTA, given the distressing pattern of pedestrian injury and fatality, to reduce the speed of vehicles as much as possible to safer speeds.

Members of the public expressing neither support nor opposition: David Pilpel

On motion to approve:

ADOPTED: AYES – Neil Ballard, Michael Chen, Aaron Leifer, John Lisovsky, Christopher Man, Daniel Murphy, Daniel Weaver, and Frank Zepeda

NAYES – Susan Vaughan

ABSENT – Queena Chen, Stephen Cornell, Karim Salgado, and Dorris Vincent

CAC MOTION 200903.02

The SFMTA CAC recommends that transit-only lanes be restricted to the use of public buses and taxi cabs on Geary Boulevard.

Members of the public expressing support: David Pilpel

On motion to approve:

FAILED ADOPTION: AYES – Neil Ballard, Daniel Murphy, Susan Vaughan, and Daniel Weaver

NAYES – Michael Chen, Aaron Leifer, John Lisovsky, Christopher Man Frank Zepeda

ABSENT – Queena Chen, Stephen Cornell, Karim Salgado, Dorris Vincent

8. Presentation, discussion, and possible action regarding the state of Muni operations from the Operator perspective. (Roger Marengo, President, Transit Workers Union (TWU) Local 250-A. No explanatory documents.)

Roger Marengo said the state of the SFMTA is in extreme peril. It is a debacle. There is no accountability. Muni has one of the most beautiful and unique forms of public transportation on the planet with 15 different modes of transportation including vintage cars, cable cars, and historical vehicles and other modes of transportation that no one else on the planet has. However, Muni has the ugliest form of management. The SFMTA is running amok with 100 percent impunity, autonomy, self-sovereignty, and zero accountability. He inquired how it is possible to shut down the LRV system for half a year and when it reopens, it breaks down the first weekday that it is back in operation. If it would have been an Operator that caused this Muni meltdown, they would have probably been terminated.

Last year, the problem was splices and overhead wires. This year, the problem was splices and Covid-19. Next year, the problem will be negligence and ineptitude. In 2022 it will be apathy and stubbornness. It's ridiculous. There are hundreds of millions of dollars for a bunch of different projects, but they can't find a measly \$300,000 to fund BackFirst, which is an essential service for the Transit Operators.

Mr. Marengo stated that they are asking for three things; to bring back LRV service, the SFMTA's commitment to fulfill the contracts that were negotiated last year with no lay-offs, and more communication between the SFMTA and TWU Local 250-A. When the agency has meetings with department heads where they make decisions and then tell TWU Local 250-A what they're going to do instead of actively involving them, that is not communication. They want to be a part of the discussions and decisions.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Written 150-Word Public Testimony by David Pilpel for Minutes of SFMTA Citizens' Advisory Council Regular Meeting September 3, 2020: Agenda Item 8, the state of Muni operations from the Operator perspective:

1. It would be great to hear from TWU Local 250-A and other employee organizations regularly.
2. I support Pete Wilson's proposal to restore the use of tokens for fare payment.

3. Labor relations at Muni and MTA have had ups and downs. Actually, few ups and more downs.
4. From my experience, I think the big disconnect now is with more planners at 1 South Van Ness and fewer promotions into Muni management from the rank and file, there is less connection to the field.
5. MTA should use an existing structure called the JLMB, the Joint Labor-Management Board.
6. Management needs to have a real understanding of what motivates operators to come to work.
7. I'm happy to discuss the platform budget, scheduling, supervision, and other issues at another time.
8. MTA needs a plan to address Muni passenger behavioral health issues, and there are many.

Loree, a member of TWU Local 250-A from Woods division, stated that it should be a part of management duties to ride transit so they can see what goes on. Just like Transit Fare Inspectors, she only sees them on certain lines. It's very hard to try to talk to Operators and explain to them that the SFMTA is broke when they hear all this money is being spent on various projects. She wondered how the SFMTA can say they have no money when \$89 million is being spent to upgrade NextBus.

Pete Wilson stated that the main part of his job is defending union members with management. There are more Operators being assaulted and there's not much support. There are many incidents where the general public becomes angry with Operators for following protocol and rules that are not known to the public.

Edward Mason stated that there needs to be more cooperation and communication between management and the Operators. There needs to be a policy consideration on how the SFMTA spends their capital money. He inquired if it is necessary to spend \$1 billion on Central Subway to go a mile and a half when there are many other pressing needs. Better Market street has morphed from a \$115 million project to \$750 million. There needs to be a complete rethink about how Muni is operated and managed from the top down and the bottom up.

Roger Marengo stated that the SFMTA has brand new vehicles but a 30-year-old communication system. Managers need to be physically out in the streets at certain key strategic locations for LRV service while the Transportation Management Center (TMC) is down.

Aleena Galloway from Green division stated that she has been an Operator for 25 years. Operator safety equals passenger safety. Prior to the pandemic, there was no emphasis on operator safety so how can we expect to have safety now. Personal protective equipment (PPE) came very late, and operators had to struggle for it when it should have been automatic. If Operators need assistance, it comes very slowly. There is a lot of trouble with communication. Upper management is top heavy. She stated that she loves her job but would like to feel valued as an employee and that is more than just receiving a paycheck.

9. Presentation, discussion, and possible action regarding the Engineering, Maintenance, and Safety Committee (EMSC) report and recommendations.

Council member Zepeda reported that there were no recommendations from the August 26th EMSC meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

David Pilpel stated that the word “recommendations” should not be included in the committee report item title unless there are actual recommendations that were made.

10. Council Member Information and Agenda Item Requests. (For discussion only)

Daniel Murphy requested a presentation on the Muni Metro reopening and what went wrong.

Neil Ballard asked what the rationale was behind the rerouting of the 48 Quintara line and when it will be back to its regular route.

John Lisovsky requested a presentation on the Tenderloin Pedestrian Safety Improvements and potential car-free streets.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Tom Barton stated that the 48 Quintara bus line is re-routed temporarily. He wants to know why it was re-routed and when it will be back to normal.

ADJOURN- The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

Submitted by:



Keka Robinson-Luqman
SFMTA CAC – Secretary

Next regular meeting: Thursday, October 1st at 5:30pm | Online via Skype