



Muni Metro Core Capacity Study Community Working Group

Thursday, May 09, 2024, 6:00 p.m.

Union Square conference room and Microsoft Teams meeting

CWG Members	Project Staff
Julia Adams Karl Aguilar Tammy Chan Lian Chang Alice Duesdieker Dylan Fabris Cyrus Hall Sally Hatchett Krista Judge Rick Laubscher Adrienne Leifer Alex Madrid Taylor Mogavero Bert Polacci Mark Sawchuk Jean-Paul Torres Lisa Yu	Kansai Uchida (SFMTA) Liz Brisson (SFMTA) David Sindel (SFMTA) Michael Randolph (SFMTA) Mariana Maguire (SFMTA) Chester Fung (HNTB) Ann Cheng (Ann Cheng Consulting)

Community Working Group member introductions and icebreaker

Presentation discussion

1. SFMTA staff presented the themes heard in the questionnaire.
2. Discussion about potential capacity improving strategies
 - a. CWG member asked where longer trains would be used
 - i. SFMTA staff replied that the two corridors under consideration for longer trains are Ocean Beach – downtown – 4th and King (the N Judah route) and

SF State – downtown (the inner part of the M Ocean View). Kansai added that 4 cars is challenging and that 3 cars on both routes is most likely.

- b. CWG member asked what “low-floor” and “high-floor” mean.
 - i. SFMTA staff replied that “low floor” vehicles are those like in San Diego and San Jose, with the floor about 14 inches high (roughly the height of the first step on Muni’s current fleet.) “High floor” vehicles have a floor several feet high like the current Muni fleet. Low-floor cars are easier to provide accessible boarding because the ramps are smaller.
3. Discussion about 3- and 4-car trains
 - a. CWG member commented that the why is important – the N Judah is expected to be the first line to go over capacity.
 - b. CWG member asked about tradeoffs and whether capital costs would be considered in that.
 - i. SFMTA staff replied that capital costs would be factored into the evaluation.
 1. CWG member commented that each proposal needs a feasibility rating, with full-fleet replacement with low-floor vehicles likely having low feasibility.
 - a. SFMTA staff replied that feasibility will be considered in the evaluation.
 - c. SFMTA staff noted that this working group is testing the way the team talks about these things and will use feedback to prepare the broader public outreach.
 - d. CWG member asked about the status of the current Siemens vehicle order, and whether it would be possible to trade in existing cars or future options for low-floor vehicles.
 - i. SFMTA staff replied that the timeline for this project is around mid-life or end of life of fleet we are purchasing now. In the long run we want to get away from replacing the whole fleet as we have been and moving to continuous replacement.
 - e. CWG member commented that the SFMTA team should not be stuck on feasibility and should think bigger, and that low-floor vehicles should be part of that larger vision.
 - i. SFMTA staff agreed that the study is asking what the system can be at its best, and whether it is possible to get to full accessibility. The packages are the building blocks of that vision.

- f. CWG member commented that they are excited about the M Ocean View portion of the study, and that she hopes the track can be moved to the west side of 19th Avenue to better serve SF State and the planned Stonestown development.
 - i. SFMTA staff replied that a full analysis of the M between SF State and West Portal is part of the second phase of this study.
 - g. SFMTA staff reminded participants that the aim of this group is for the members to talk to each other and not just with SFMTA staff. The aim is to have conversations about the bigger vision, with the understanding that the SFMTA is trying to figure out how things can work. Staff is interested in hearing what and where participants think the challenges will be so the SFMTA can then think how to solve those problems.
 - h. CWG member commented that the SFMTA should be looked 20/30 years out and working backwards. They asked whether in a system with some high-floor and some low-floor trains, the low-floor trains would only be used on lines that did not enter the subway.
 - i. SFMTA staff confirmed that yes, in a mixed system (rather than all high-floor or all-low-floor except the T), high-floor vehicles would be used on lines entering the subway and low-floor vehicles used on other lines.
 - i. CWG member asked about whether additional pocket tracks in the subway for storing out-of-service trains would be considered in the study. Another CWG member asked whether it would be possible to add another rail in the subway
 - j. CWG member asked about stop consolidation and stop spacing policy.
 - i. SFMTA staff responded that the study may recommend general changes to stop spacing but will not make recommendations for specific stops except in the SF State – West Portal segment that will be studied in additional detail.
4. Discussion about route restructuring
- a. CWG member asked why new tunneling is not being considered in this study, noting that cities like Paris and London have substantial subway networks.
 - i. SFMTA staff replied that we are not looking at new tunneling as part of the plan, since it tends to be significantly more expensive than the capacity proposals under consideration. The study is primarily looking at medium-cost proposals that maximize capacity of the existing tunnels. Other projects will look at potential expansions, notably a Geary subway which was another recommendation of the ConnectSF study. The way transit is funded in the US also makes it less possible to afford a significant increase in subway tunnels as compared to the cities mentioned.

- b. Participants commented that transfers should be accessible and safe, and that they should not add to overall travel time.
 - c. SFMTA noted the saying “organization before electronics before concrete” that reflects the relative difficulty and cost of different changes.
5. Discussion about crossing arms and signal preemption
- a. SFMTA staff noted that challenges with these strategies are more engineering and regulatory – the policy decision is still difficult, but simpler than others.
 - b. CWG member asked whether changes to all-way stop intersections would be considered.
 - i. SFMTA staff replied that conversion to signalized intersections and other changes will be considered.
 - c. CWG member asked about Caltrain
 - i. SFMTA staff replied that some other light rail systems including San Jose have crossing arms, particularly where they’ve reused old freight tracks. There are only a few key locations on the Muni Metro system, mostly on 19th Avenue, where they are most likely to be useful.
6. Discussion about exclusive right-of-way (“separated” or “raised” track)
- a. In response to the questionnaire, SFMTA staff clarified that “raised” trackways are a few inches above street level (like the N Judah between 9th Avenue and 19th Avenue), not fully elevated like in New York and Chicago. The project will look at curb-separated trackways (whether raised a few inches, or at street level like the T Third Street).
 - b. SFMTA staff noted that the decision is first to have a transit lane, then whether to have a physical barrier like a curb. Separation helps with regulatory approval and may be required for longer trains.



Break-out room: Route restructuring

1. CWG member commented on the difference of “may” versus “will” in perception and said that some things will definitely occur like inconvenience. They said not to minimize opposition when giving summaries.
2. CWG member asked about the possibility of the J Church running on the surface on Market Street.
 - a. CWG member commented that it is a mitigation but less desirable.
3. CWG member commented not to pit riders against each other
4. CWG member commented that the SFMTA needs to do the difficult work to make things easy for riders, like creating same-platform transfers, not doing it the ‘easy way’ and expecting riders to figure it out.
5. CWG member commented that a commitment of no forced transfers is needed – that all Muni Metro routes would run downtown even if not in the subway
 - a. CWG member commented that would be the absolute minimum.
6. CWG member commented that the substitution proposal back when subway was introduced was unpopular. They commented that the rail network doesn't make sense as designed, and that bus riders transfer. They said that there is a need to consider what makes sense for the system as a whole.
7. CWG member commented that the unfortunate thing is the system isn't well designed and we're stuck with it (great systems are hub and spoke - but we haven't done a good job making the transfer reasonable when we've tried).
8. CWG member commented that using a mobility device during COVID was difficult - the transfer was very difficult
9. CWG member commented that TCUP is needed to address capacity, but some service restructuring is probably needed to achieve the needed capacity (but transfer has to be so painless and seamless that it doesn't introduce inconvenience).
10. CWG member asked how a West Portal transfer would work.
 - a. CWG member replied that SFMTA tried temporary platforms at West Portal in 2020, but it would have made more sense to have a platform at 15th or St Francis Circle and then transfer to the M there (same platform, rather than having to cross streets).
11. CWG member commented that BART has good cross-platform transfers, which could be a model for any that are needed on Muni Metro.



Break-out room: 3- and 4-car trains

1. CWG member commented that communications will be a major challenge for the program. Longer trains will be easier to message because the benefits are obvious, but other aspects will be more difficult. Stop consolidation in particular tends to result in instinctive reactions to do nothing, because the known feels safer than an uncertain (but theoretically better) change.
2. Project staff asked the participants what early conversations among the public tend to be about.
 - a. CWG member responded that many people believe that the city can't do anything right, and that any project is destined to be a boondoggle. Parking in particular has become a culture war in San Francisco (rather than about real needs); a lot of people are afraid that they are never going to drive or park again; it's become a bit of a culture war in SF; it's not always about real needs.
 - b. CWG member agreed and added that the conversation about the Geary bus lanes was very discouraging – it seemed like some people can't imagine being able to access places without a car.
 - c. CWG member added that on West Portal, they knew a merchant whose primary concern was a single parking space. They recommended stronger communication about what merchants could gain; the merchant didn't feel that there was a vision that would be something he could get excited about.
3. CWG member commented that they don't like the word "trade-off" – they want there to be a way that everyone can come away with something. They gave examples of treaties, where all countries involved decide it's an arrangement they can live with, even if not their optimal.
4. SFMTA staff noted the need to show the benefits of projects.
 - a. CWG member commented that most people worry about their own delay, and that small speed-ups for lots of people do not feel as compelling. People don't understand the magnitude of people that are carried by transit ("why is the bus lane always empty"). They noted a difference between projects like utility work (where stakeholders adjacent to work tend to trust the experts and let them fix things) and transit/streets.
 - b. CWG member replied that there is a sense that we are all atomized and not together as a community – that people's individual needs are the most important. It's very similar with housing.

Break-out room: Separated right of way

1. CWG member commented that she loves the idea – if you can't have a tunnel, separation is next best. They suggested including landscaping elements.
2. CWG member commented that this is an opportunity to think beyond just the right of way. They said to think big and think about Metro corridors of the future. They suggested consideration of pedestrianizing places like the 9th and Irving area, and to think about spaces that are truly prioritized for trains.
3. CWG member indicated agreement with the previous statements. They commented that the SFMTA should consider relative functionality of signals and crossing arms. They commented that crossing arms may be more useful at big intersections but may be cumbersome elsewhere.
4. All participants agreed that the SFMTA should consider bollards, concrete closures or use of landscaping and beautification to close intersections, and to give more intersections to trains.
5. All participants agreed that from afar it can be hard to see if you are on a street that has forced turns at an intersection – you may get to the intersection and realize you have to turn right and find another way. They suggested making sure the signage is clear.
6. All participants agreed that the SFMTA should ignore car concerns, and that merchants will advocate for cars, but SFMTA should not defer to cars.



Adjourning comments

1. Service restructuring breakout room recap
 - a. Need to distinguish “may” and “will” when discussing tradeoffs
 - b. Minimum standards for transfers
 - c. If transfers are needed, we need to build facilities that work well, even if it is harder/more costly
2. Separated right-of-way breakout room recap
 - a. Need to think big and be visionary – imagining truly train-first spaces
 - b. Push merchants to embrace transit and be less fearful of it
3. Longer trains breakout room recap
 - a. Need to communicate how small improvements across the system are necessary and add up to large benefits, especially given the number of riders the system serves
4. Comments on format
 - a. Participants liked the questionnaire and Q&A document and enjoyed talking to each other in smaller groups.
 - b. Participants were interested in discussing multiple topics (especially since some are interlinked), either by having each breakout group cover multiple topics, or having the opportunity to be in multiple breakout groups. Some suggested splitting into breakout groups earlier.
 - c. Participants suggested trying different meeting locations, such as the cable car museum or a rail division.