

Improving Parking Access in San Francisco



Recommendations from
San Francisco's Accessible Parking
Policy Advisory Committee



Mayor's Office
on Disability



SFMTA
Municipal
Transportation
Agency

The Challenge

On a daily basis, people with disabilities have trouble finding parking in San Francisco, making it more difficult to access their destinations. Current disabled parking placard and blue zone policies are failing to increase access for people with disabilities, and reduce parking availability for all drivers. The City's Accessible Parking Policy Advisory Committee worked together to find a better solution.

There are so many disabled parking placards in current use that regular and blue spaces are often full, reducing access. There now are twice as many placards in the Bay Area as there were ten years ago. In some San Francisco neighborhoods, more than one out of every four cars parked on the streets displays a placard.

California is just one of five states that requires all cities to allow anyone with a disabled parking placard to park at metered spaces for free with no time limits. This creates a strong incentive for people without disabilities to misuse placards.

At the SFMTA, a team of specially trained parking control officers enforces placard misuse; additionally, all officers enforce blue zones and expired placards. Even so, this doesn't effectively

deter misuse because it is so difficult to catch people using placards illegally.

In October 2012, The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) worked with the Mayor's Office on Disability to gather 16 stakeholders who would tackle the challenge of making parking more accessible.

The majority of the Accessible Parking Policy Advisory Committee members were disability rights advocates, joined by others representing business, regional transportation, and medical voices. For six months, they worked to identify problems, establish goals, review research, analyze solutions, and create an integrated set of recommendations.

Mismatch between number of placards and San Francisco parking spaces



500,000+
disabled parking placards in the Bay Area

29,200
metered spaces in SF

700
blue zones in SF

The Recommendations

The Accessible Parking Policy Advisory Committee identified an integrated program of policy recommendations to increase access to street parking. After researching best practices from cities across the country, analyzing San Francisco's needs, and weighing many options, the committee came to a broad consensus on the following interdependent state (CA) and local (SF) policy changes to achieve this goal.

1. Increase blue zones

To reserve more parking spaces for people with disabilities, 4% of metered parking spaces should be blue zones. This 70% increase would require the SFMTA to install at least 470 new zones. The Mayor's Office on Disability should reevaluate San Francisco's blue zone placement guidelines to enable zones in more locations. (SF)

2. Improve enforcement of placard misuse

The SFMTA should develop disabled parking placard enforcement improvements. This could include increasing the number of parking control officers that enforce placards, increasing stings, and other options. (SF) The DMV should make placard holder photos available to parking control officers. (CA)

3. Increase oversight of placard approvals

The DMV should upgrade its database to include information about the medical providers who certify placards, and should take steps to ensure that the providers are legitimate. The existing DMV placard application eligibility criteria should be clarified to ensure that placards are issued to people with a functional need for them. (CA)

4. Remove the meter payment exemption

Based on experiences in other cities, requiring everyone to pay at the meter is the most effective way to reduce placard misuse and open up parking spaces. In Philadelphia, downtown parking availability increased by over 500% when placard holders started paying at the meter. The

Committee recommends that this policy should only be allowed as an option in jurisdictions that offer accessible payment options. (CA)

5. Direct revenue to accessibility improvements

The SFMTA should work with the disability community to channel funds from metered blue zones into accessibility improvements that would enhance mobility for people with disabilities. (SF)

6. Establish reasonable time limits

In order to help open up parking spaces, placard holders should have four-hour time limits at regular and blue meters, unless the posted time limit is longer. Placard holders should be able stay up to 30 minutes at green short-term loading zones, not including time spent getting in and out of the vehicle. Paid for by qualifying merchants, green zones are intended to support local business and reduce double-parking. (CA)



Testimonials

“People with disabilities want to move freely throughout San Francisco conducting our business, just like everyone else. Often, people try to visit to our organization, only to turn around and go home when they couldn’t find an open parking space close by. This committee explored all the options, and this set of policies is the best way to free up parking spaces for those who need them most.”

*—Jessie Lorenz, Executive Director,
Independent Living Resource Center*

“These analyses and recommendations flow from a complex and thorough process, during which some of us changed our initial views. We didn’t feel pressured, we felt heard, and we benefited from public input. I ask you to read this report in the light of the consensus support our group achieved.”

*—Bob Planthold,
Disability Beacon Award winner*

Next steps

The Mayor’s Office on Disability, the SFMTA, and members of the Accessible Parking Policy Advisory Committee are conducting significant community and policymaker outreach, both at a city and state levels. Many of the recommendations will require state law changes; at the earliest, these could be introduced in 2014 and go into effect in 2015.

Support the plan

Do you want to support improvements to accessible parking? Contact us to learn more and get involved:

- SFMTA.com/parkingaccess
- parkingaccess@SFMTA.com
- 415-701-5380

Visually accessible PDF of this document, including data references can be found at: SFMTA.com/parkingaccess.pdf

San Francisco’s Accessible Parking Policy Advisory Committee

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San Francisco Aging and Adult Services
Commission

Access Northern California

San Francisco Medical Society

Department of Motor Vehicles

San Francisco Council of District Merchants
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Building Owners and Managers Association

San Francisco Chamber of Commerce

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