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Director of Transportation Jeffrey Tumlin announces his departure from the SFMTA

On December 12, 2024, SFMTA Director of Transportation Jeffrey Tumlin announced he would be stepping down from his position at the end of 2024. Tumlin has led the SFMTA since December 2019, and his five-year contract was due to expire at the end of the year.

“Serving in this position has been the greatest honor of my life, and I’m extremely proud of what the SFMTA has accomplished during my tenure,” said **Jeffrey Tumlin**. “While we’ve faced many challenges over the past five years, we’ve also made historic progress. Muni is better than it’s ever been and is experiencing record-high customer satisfaction. San Francisco is one of the safest larger cities in the U.S. for walking and biking. And we have one of the strongest paratransit programs in the country. There is still far more to be done but I have full faith that our talented and highly motivated staff and leadership, working alongside city and state partners, will shepherd the agency into a successful new chapter.”

When Director Tumlin took over the agency in 2019, the SFMTA was suffering from systemwide Muni delays and an inhospitable agency culture with a high rate of equal employment opportunity (EEO) complaints and concerns. Under his leadership, the agency has made dramatic improvements, including:

- Creating a significantly more reliable transit network, with major subway delays down 76% since 2019 and short delays down 89%.
- Achieving Muni’s highest customer rating in 20 years with 72% of riders rating Muni as excellent or good.
- Making streets safer for people walking, biking and rolling through innovations like the Quick-Build Program, which installs adjustable traffic safety improvements that can be installed quickly and affordably.
- Reducing crashes involving pedestrians by 32% and crashes involving bikes by 33% on streets where the SFMTA has installed Quick Builds.
- Reducing the number of SFMTA EEO complaints by nearly 50% between 2020 and 2024.
- Creating an Office of Civil Rights within the SFMTA.

The SFMTA is proud to make these improvements even while facing a once-in-a-century pandemic and the resulting fallout in the years after, including an economic downturn that has severely impacted its budget.



“Jeff has been a leader in building infrastructure, improving Muni operations, and making the hard decisions necessary for our city as we grow,” said **Mayor London Breed**. “As we plan for more than 80,000 new homes across San Francisco, we must have a transit system that moves people around this city whether they are riding Muni, driving, walking, or bicycling. Under Jeff’s leadership, Muni is doing better than it has in years. It’s more reliable, safer, and more efficient, even coming out of a pandemic. We’ve seen a dramatic decrease in subway breakdowns and a twenty year high in Muni approval ratings. Change can be hard, but Jeff was not afraid to make those decisions necessary to allow people to move safely and efficiently across this city. The SFMTA is a challenging department to run, and I want to thank Jeff for leading this Department and serving our city through the difficult years of the pandemic and after to get us where we are today.”

“I’m incredibly grateful to Jeff Tumlin for his service to the people of San Francisco and for his forward-looking approach to our transportation system,” said **California State Senator Scott Wiener**. “I’ve been a daily Muni rider for 27 years, and under Jeff’s leadership, Muni is better than it’s ever been during that time period. Service is faster and more reliable due to Jeff’s focus on making Muni work, and as a result Muni rider satisfaction surveys are at historic highs. Jeff has also focused like a laser on making our streets safer, which saves lives. Jeff’s leadership for San Francisco has been extraordinary, and I wish him only the best going forward.”

Muni Service Improvements

Muni service has improved dramatically. Muni’s main lines are faster, more frequent and more reliable than they’ve ever been. Ridership is steadily growing, and riders have given Muni the highest customer satisfaction rating the agency has ever recorded. Muni carries over half a million daily riders, two and a half times as many riders as the next largest Bay Area operator (BART), and nearly half of all Bay Area transit trips.

Tumlin was a champion of the Muni Forward program, through which the agency has installed more than 75 miles of transit lanes and over 100 miles of overall transit priority improvements, which have made Muni faster than ever. He supported SFMTA mechanics’ embrace of preventive maintenance through programs like the agency’s regular Fix It! Weeks. During Tumlin’s tenure, the agency completed two transformative capital projects – the Van Ness Bus Rapid Transit Corridor and the Central Subway. Although previous directors developed and led these projects, Tumlin was responsible for bringing them to a close, conducting detailed audits, learning hard lessons from project errors, and working to ensure those mistakes will not happen again.

Street Safety Improvements

Under Tumlin’s leadership, the SFMTA undertook innovative programs to make it safer for San Franciscans to bike, walk and socialize on city streets, including programs that limited through-



traffic on designated “Slow Streets” and created safe, car-free promenades through Golden Gate Park and alongside the Pacific Ocean. Those innovations have become lasting programs that have contributed to San Francisco being one of the safest large cities in the U.S. for people who walk and bike.

Other innovations included the SFMTA’s Quick-Build Program. Quick-Build projects are reversible, adjustable traffic safety improvements that can be installed quickly and affordably. We have installed them throughout the city to make high-injury streets safer for people walking, biking and rolling. Crashes involving pedestrians are down 32% and crashes involving bikes are down 33% on streets where the SFMTA has installed quick builds.

Tumlin demonstrated a deep commitment to making it safe and joyful for people of all ages and abilities to travel on San Francisco streets. The people who are most vulnerable traveling on our streets right now are people who get around by walking, riding a bike, skateboarding and riding scooters and wheelchairs. Seniors, children and people with disabilities need more protection to ensure they feel comfortable walking, biking and rolling – whether out of necessity or for pleasure.

Leading During COVID

Tumlin led the SFMTA during a tumultuous time. Four months into his job as Director of Transportation, San Francisco went into lockdown because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Tumlin guided the SFMTA as it provided essential transportation services to San Francisco residents. When the worst part of the pandemic waned, he steered the agency as it brought back services while grappling with the social and economic impacts of the pandemic. Bay Area commute patterns had changed, more people were working from home and the agency faced the direst financial crisis of its existence. Nonetheless, Muni has adapted to the changing circumstances, expanding bus service to better serve people’s needs by investing in lines such as the 22 Fillmore and 15 Bayview Hunters Point Express and using data to create improvements that otherwise reflect the new ways we live and work post-pandemic.

Improvement in Workplace Culture

Director Tumlin promoted culture change within the SFMTA that encouraged staff to take initiative, speak out about ideas for improving service, innovate new ways of doing things and learn from past mistakes.

Tumlin has been determined to bridge the agency’s budget gap without laying off staff. He firmly believes that the workers who transported San Francisco’s essential workers during the pandemic should not be the people who have to pay for the pandemic’s ongoing economic impact. Tumlin has made it one of his top priorities to make the SFMTA a great place to work, since the agency had previously suffered from low morale and a history of inequitable treatment of employees. He supported the creation of the SFMTA’s Office of Civil Rights this past April to



help the agency to better deliver on its vision of equity and justice in San Francisco's transportation system. The teams that comprise the Office of Civil Rights have improved the workplace culture at the SFMTA in a myriad of ways. For example, the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Office, Ombuds Office and Human Resources teams have collaborated to reduce the number of SFMTA EEO complaints by nearly 50% between 2020 and 2024.

Regional Transit Funding Leadership

All this work has been completed despite the SFMTA's financial crisis. The agency's revenues in FY 23-24 were \$275M, or 16% less than they were before the pandemic (adjusted for inflation). Every major revenue source the agency relies on has decreased due to lingering pandemic impacts on the economy and travel patterns: parking and transit fare revenue shrunk due to the shift to remote work, and General Fund and state grant funding are impacted by the ongoing economic slowdown.

The SFMTA got through the last four years by fighting for San Francisco's fair share of federal pandemic relief funding and being prudent about using that funding. In FY26-27 when federal, state and regional transit relief funds run out, the agency's budget deficit will range from \$239M to \$322M. This looming fiscal cliff threatens the progress the SFMTA has made, and the services San Franciscans rely on. This is the single greatest challenge facing the SFMTA today.

Although Tumlin will be leaving the SFMTA before the financial crisis is resolved, he has worked with the San Francisco Controller's Office to set up a working group whose charge is to gather public input, identify solutions and prioritize options to address the SFMTA's funding gap. The Muni Funding Working Group includes representatives from the Mayor's Office, Board of Supervisors, Controller's Office, SFMTA Board of Directors, business, labor, community advocates and transit experts. It is considering options to both decrease costs and increase revenue through efficiency improvements, service cuts, revenue enhancements and service enhancements.

Acting Leadership

SFMTA's Director of Transit, Julie Kirschbaum, will serve as the agency's Acting Director of Transportation beginning on January 1, 2025.

ABOUT THE SFMTA

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) is a department of the City and County of San Francisco responsible for the management of all ground transportation in the city. The SFMTA has oversight over the Municipal Railway (Muni) public transit, as well as bicycling, paratransit, parking, traffic, walking, and taxis. Established by voter mandate in 1999, the SFMTA aggregated multiple San Francisco city agencies, including the Department of Parking and Traffic, Muni, and since 2007, the Taxi Commission.