

TAXIS AND ACCESSIBLE SERVICES DIVISION
Monthly Report
January 2009

TAXIS

❖ **Meetings**

- The Director held meetings with 11 individual advocates within the taxi industry, as well as with the management of 17 color schemes. The purpose of these meetings was to introduce the new Director and hear ideas and proposals from the industry. It has been a very fruitful dialogue.
- The Director met multiple times with the Taxi Detail at the Hall of Justice to discuss that unit's needs and priorities, including meetings with Lt. Jean Scholtz and Cmmdr. Sylvia Harper. The Director also attended an hour of the taxi certification class offered by the SFPD.
- The Director met with the current legal counsel for the Taxi Commission to learn more about the history of San Francisco taxi regulation.
- The Director attended a Paratransit Coordinating Council to introduce herself and get to know the participants and the issues discussed at those Council meetings.
- The Director met with the Finance Division to develop a budget from the March 1 transfer date through the end of FY2009-2010.
- The Director met with attorney Phil Ward and economist Brian Brown about their proposal for a structure for setting rates of fare.

❖ **Staffing and Facilities**

- The Director met with the current staff of the Taxi Commission and Accessible Services staff to get to know each other.
- PDQs were submitted and approved for two Manager positions for the Division.

❖ **Regulations**

In anticipation of the transition of regulatory jurisdiction over taxis to the SFMTA, the Director offered a complete set of proposed motor vehicle for hire regulations for the Board's consideration at its meeting of January 6, 2009. Since then the Director has had substantial contact with the taxi industry regarding the proposed regulations. Many thoughtful and detailed comments were received.

The general consensus of the industry was that substantive regulations should wait until the industry has had a chance to fully review and discuss the impact of and alternatives to those proposed regulations. When presented with the draft regulations at its meeting of January 13, 2009, Commissioners of the Taxicab Commission requested that their continuing work be taken into account in the SFMTA's final adoption of substantive regulations. Further, at its meeting of January 8, 2009, the Citizens' Advisory Committee recommended that only the regulations that are immediately necessary to provide for a smooth transition be adopted prior

to March 1, 2009 and that the balance of the regulations be fully considered and discussed by the SFMTA and the taxi industry.

Accordingly, the Director prepared revised regulations to govern only those procedural matters that will make the transition of jurisdiction easier for the SFMTA Board and staff. All comments received as of January 26, 2009 were considered to the extent that they related to the sections included in the revised regulations.

❖ **Presentations**

The Director made the following presentations:

January 6:	Presentation of draft regulations to the SFMTA Board of Directors
January 8:	Presentation of draft regulations to the Citizens' Advisory Council
January 13:	Presentation of draft regulations to Policy and Governance Committee
January 13:	Presentation of draft regulations to Taxi Commission
January 27:	Overview of taxi industry to SFMTA Board of Directors
January 30:	Two hour discussion of specifics of draft regulations with Taxi Commission Rules Subcommittee.

❖ **Next Priorities**

The top priorities for the coming month are:

1. Get all staffing/civil service issues resolved for new staff.
2. Schedule times and locations for a series of meetings with any interested participants about the draft regulations.
3. Publish material on the website including notice of a series of meetings to review proposed Motor Vehicle for Hire regulations and solicit comments.
4. Coordinate a meeting between the color schemes and the Traffic Engineering Division to discuss the issue of taxi stands, especially enforcement and location.
5. A meeting is scheduled with Reggie Smith (who is not available until then because of jury duty) to discuss implementation of drug testing requirements. In the interim the Director will explore the systems of other California cities, as well as looking into the potential for revising state law requirements to better achieve the goals of drug testing.
6. Working with Finance, collect and begin to review proposals for system of transferability of taxi and ramp taxi permits.

ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

❖ **Paratransit Debit Card:** Program design moving with Debit Card Central System (DCCS) contractor, Cabconnect. Review of software documentation and design review by project team are underway. Mechanism for driver to add red flag to transactions has been developed.

- Lease Agreement between Veolia and SFMTA has been executed.
- Two taxi companies participating in the pilot program (Desoto and National) have selected Verifone as their ITE supplier and contracts between these companies and Veolia for a use agreement has been finalized.
- The contract documents for purchase of Verifone equipment have been finalized.

- The agreement with Yellow has been finalized to develop the interface between their current systems (George Anderson software with Wireless Edge equipment) and the DCCS has also been finalized. Luxor is negotiating with Wireless Edge and George Anderson to upgrade their existing DDS system and a number of issues remain to be resolved before a contract with Luxor for the interface can be executed.
- 106 paratransit customers have volunteered to participate in the debit card pilot project, manufacture of pilot debit cards completed and design for the debit card and knuckle buster receipt for back up use with IVR system have been completed
- The debit card pilot is anticipated to start within 60 days, and to last for a period of 60 days.
- A meeting with the taxi industry stakeholders will be scheduled to provide an update on the progress of the project and to answer questions. A second meeting will be scheduled for the taxi industry to view and demo the ITE products that are available to be purchased under this project.

❖ **Paratransit Van Procurement**

- 14 of 24 diesel cutaway lift equipped vans by Bus West have been delivered and registered and lease agreement signed by MPT. The remaining 10 Type II vehicles have arrived and were inspected by Muni maintenance staff, and some defects regarding the exhaust system were flagged. Bus West has fixed the defects, and Muni maintenance staff is to re-inspect on January 29. All the new vehicles are being run on bio-diesel, except the Mini vans which are only available using gasoline.
- Five Type III lift-equipped cutaways have been manufactured by Bus West and will be delivered in the coming weeks.

❖ **Paratransit Ramp Taxi Driver Incentive Program:** After much review with Broker staff, SFMTA staff has recommended that we await debit card implementation for implement of the incentive program.

❖ **St. Francis Circle Station Reconstruction:** AS staff remains concerned about the missed opportunity to improve both accessibility and safety at St. Francis Circle station serving the K and M lines, because it appears that SFMTA has decided is construct a wayside platform stop instead of a full high level platform.

- Muni Operations is concerned that up/down steps will have to be cycled an additional time to accommodate the station, which could be detrimental to operations.
- Discussions with SFMTA Safety staff indicate that safety is not the major concern. Concerns revolve more around community acceptance of a high level platform at 14th and West Portal; without which the up/down steps cycle would continue indefinitely.
- This opportunity to improve access will not arise again for at least 30 years.

❖ **TEP:** Muni Accessibility Advisory Committee presented comments to TEP staff at the Nov. 20 meeting.

- Once changes were explained, MAAC members were generally in favor of new proposals. There is a feeling that TEP has adequately responded to complaints raised by senior and disabled transit customers.
- MAAC is very concerned with the need for an Automated Announcement system on Breda cars when traveling on the surface; MAAC voted to send a letter to the SFMTA Board.

❖ **Next Bus Push-to-Talk:** PTT hardware has been installed at all the T-Third platforms. Signage in Braille is being produced to be affixed to the Push to Talk buttons. Previous

signage contractor has declined to produce additional signs. A new contractor has been identified. The project is waiting for a cost estimate and prototype sign to be produced.

- ❖ **Elevator Status on NextMuni Display:** AS staff is working with SFMTA Construction, Communications and Stationary Engineering to increase accuracy of the essential elevator status information displayed on NextMuni displays. SFMTA IT has approved the purchase of an iPhone which provides a browser with sufficient sophistication to adequately access the Next Bus management system. It is currently on order for Facilities Maintenance staff person Scott Broder who will keep the updates current and check them regularly.
- ❖ **ADA Observer/Spotter Program:** AS staff coordinating the transition of the clandestine disabled rider program between the former Muni security contractor and the new contractor, Cypress Security. AS staff have discussed increased responsibilities for the observers and are looking to bring additional staff onboard. Working with Travis Fox on expanding the scope of the current observer program.
- ❖ **Light Rail Vehicle Digital Voice Announcement System Program:** AS staff working with CPUC, Grants and Fleet Engineering to develop cost estimate and identify funding sources and technology to equip LRVs with DVAS audible announcements and text displays. Customers with disabilities have reported many instances where LRV operators do not make required transfer point announcements when operating vehicles on surface lines. This is of utmost importance to MAAC. This project is being added to list of potential “stimulus” funded projects.
- ❖ **Balboa Park Station Improvements/SFMTA Customer Access:** AS staff met with SFMTA construction/engineering and BART facilities planning staff to discuss walkway designs to improve access to Muni stops from the new Ocean Ave Entrance at the Balboa Park Station. SFMTA is looking at integrating the walkway project with the Green track replacement project which will rebuild the K and J accessible platform near the walkway for alighting passengers and which is constructing a new platform to provide service to those disabled persons beginning their trip at Balboa Park on the J and K lines. BART is working on design of the walkway and both agencies are trying to identify potential funding sources. Federal economic stimulus funds will be considered.
- ❖ **New Freedom/Lifeline Shopping Grants:** SFMTA was informed that New Freedom Shopping Grant Application was funded at the full amount requested. Lifeline Transportation Program grant funds are in the process of being programmed. An implementation plan has been developed and staff has been meeting with the community partners, paratransit broker staff and group van providers in an effort to solicit information and develop the parameters of the program.
 - SFCTA staff has recommended \$1.56M Lifeline Transportation funding for the Shopping Shuttle, although this amount may be reduced if the State budget is further reduced. It remains unclear how the state budget process will affect this grant.