Hayes Valley Pay or Permit Parking Evaluation Plan

SFMTA Residential Parking Policy Team
InfoRPP@SFMTA.com

SFMTA

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA)'s Residential Parking Program is a longstanding part of the City's parking management strategy. By using time limits to restrict parking by non-residents on streets in residential areas, more spaces become available for residents and visitors alike. Time limits, however, allow for limited flexibility, are time-consuming to enforce, and, in many areas, do not deliver on the promise of parking availability.

Pay or Permit Parking, which replaces the time limit for non-permitholders with payment, is potentially a much more effective way at managing parking in high-demand residential areas. SFMTA's first widespread implementation of this regulation, located in the Hayes Valley neighborhood, was completed in early 2023.

SFMTA will work with a contractor to collect and analyze on-street parking occupancy. By measuring the occupancy percentage, permit percentage, and other metrics from this and other data sources, SFMTA will understand just how effective Pay or Permit Parking is in Hayes Valley and learn more about what other areas of the City would benefit from such a regulation.

What is Pay or Permit Parking?

San Francisco's Residential Parking Permit Program

In 1976, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors approved the creation of a Residential Parking Permit (RPP) program as an attempt to reduce congestion on residential streets by better managing parking. In the subsequent years, the RPP program has grown into 32 separate areas spread out over nearly half of San Francisco's housing units and governing nearly a quarter of the City's on-street parking spaces. These areas are created through a resident-driven neighborhood planning process and extended on a block-by-block basis by resident petition.

The on-street regulation associated with virtually all RPP blocks[1] is a time limit for visitors. Vehicles without a permit are subject to a fine if they are not moved after a certain amount of time – usually two hours – during the days and times of enforcement. Residents or certain others associated with a property in an RPP Area can purchase a permit for their vehicle that exempts them from these time limits. As of 2022, all annual permits are now digital – SFMTA staff maintain a list of valid license plates that Parking Control Officers (PCOs) check against when enforcing regulations. All told, SFMTA sells around 100,000 permits a year, including those sold for businessowners, delivery vehicles, teachers, and guests of residents.

The Federal Highway Administration funded an RPP Evaluation and Reform Project that was completed in 2018. Among the results of that planning process were legislative changes to San Francisco's Transportation Code, including a reduction of the four-permits-per-household limit to two permits per household and one permit per driver in newly-established RPP Areas, and the creation of a new regulation type: Pay or Permit Parking.

---

[1] Part of the unit block of Telegraph Hill Boulevard, at the base of Coit Tower, does not allow any parking by non-permitholders on Saturdays and Sundays. The other exception to this rule is Pay or Permit parking.

How Pay or Permit Parking Works

The two-hour time limit that governs most RPP spaces generally discourages all-day parking by non-residents. However, its enforcement is much more difficult than enforcement of metered parking, as it requires two passes (one to mark the car, and another more than two hours later to actually issue the citation) as opposed to one for metered parking. This challenge for enforcement means more drivers may exceed the time limit without facing a citation. The time limit also makes things more difficult for visitors who may have a legitimate reason to stay longer while still following the rules, as it requires them to move their car every two hours – a cumbersome task for, for example, a plumber working on a major installation project.

A sign for Pay or Permit Parking in Hayes Valley

Throughout the decades of parking management in San Francisco, SFMTA and its predecessors have effectively used paid parking as a way to manage parking in high-demand commercial areas. Pricing helps reduce the length of stay of parked cars, encouraging turnover that helps businesses thrive. A 2010 federal grant led to the creation of the SF*park* program, which enhanced the turnover-generating effects of parking meters by tailoring the prices of meters on a given block to the demand on that block.

Pay or Permit Parking pairs the turnover-inducing abilities of paid parking with the residential privilege of the RPP program. It can increase parking availability by shortening the length and reducing the number of non-resident vehicle parking events through the need for payment, while also adding a layer of flexibility thanks to the removal of time limits. It can also generate net revenue for the Agency, so long as the costs of paystation installation do not exceed the payments made by drivers.

Visitors to a Pay or Permit block can pay to park at a paystation, of which there is at least one on each block, or pay using their mobile device by entering the zone number that is listed on overhead signs on the block. These signs look similar to signs on regular metered blocks, except that they show which RPP Area or Areas are exempt from payment.

After its approval in 2018, SFMTA implemented Pay or Permit Parking on single blockfaces on Colin P. Kelly, Jr. Street in South Beach and De Haro Street in Potrero Hill. At the same time, staff began working with residents in Hayes Valley and saw the potential benefit of the new regulation in this neighborhood.

Hayes Valley Parking & Curb Management Plan

About Hayes Valley

The Hayes Valley neighborhood is located in the heart of San Francisco. The Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association defines the neighborhood's boundary as McAllister Street on the north, Van Ness Avenue on the east, Market Street on the southeast, and Buchanan, Hermann, and Webster Streets on the west side. The neighborhood overlaps with San Francisco's Civic Center, which includes City Hall, several local, state, and federal office buildings, and major arts institutions such as the San Francisco Symphony, the War Memorial Opera House, and SFJAZZ. Hayes Valley itself is a destination for dining and shopping, centered on Hayes Street, as well as home to schools and medical offices.

Hayes Valley has a mix of housing, from smaller apartment buildings and single-family homes to larger buildings on redeveloped parcels. The neighborhood was once bisected by the Central Freeway; in the two and a half decades following its demolition, much of its footprint has been developed with affordable and mixed-income housing. Hayes Valley is served by several Muni bus routes and the Van Ness Muni Metro station. In addition to metered parking on most streets in the eastern part of the neighborhood, there is also an SFMTA-operated parking garage, the Performing Arts Garage, at the corner of Gough Street and Grove Street.

Hayes Valley was an ideal location for the first major installation of Pay or Permit Parking. Its mix of residential densities, land uses, and street types provides a range of contexts with which to understand how Pay or Permit operates. Its proximity to already-metered areas means that residents and visitors were used to having meters around. Perhaps most importantly, though, the neighborhood was largely receptive to the change in regulation.

Pre-Existing Parking Conditions

Parking in Hayes Valley was very difficult before the implementation of Area HV. In data collected in March 2019 and October 2020 on RPP Area S blocks[2] that would later be converted to Pay or Permit blocks, occupancy was very high and permit percentage was relatively low, meaning parking was difficult for all visitors to these blocks while only a small percentage of the spaces were taken up by residents. These issues were present at all times of the day, with 25% of vehicles staying all day.

Time of Day[3]	Occupancy Percentage[4]	Percentage of Vehicles with RPP Permits
6:00 AM	97%	45%
10:00 AM	91%	34%
2:00 PM	106%	42%
8:00 PM	97%	38%

[2] RPP regulations were 8am-9pm, Monday through Friday.
[3] Times are approximate.
[4] Percentages above 100% reflect situations where more vehicles are parked than there are legal, publicly available spaces, due to illegal parking or parking in front of driveways.

Planning Process

In 2017, SFMTA published the results of the Residential Parking Permit Evaluation & Reform Project. Among the recommendations were 1) shrinking the size of the largest RPP Areas, 2) creating the Pay or Permit regulation type, and 3) reducing the number of permits that could be purchased per household. The former two elements were passed by SFMTA's Board of Directors in 2018, the latter of which only applying to new RPP Areas.

At the time, Hayes Valley made up the easternmost portion of RPP Area S, the largest RPP Area in the city. It also was partially the subject of the Market-Octavia Plan, a City planning document which called for, among other things, parking permit limits in the plan area. This was also a neighborhood undergoing immense change with new housing development and the rise of the popularity of Transportation Network Companies impacting the Hayes Street commercial corridor. This made it an ideal candidate for staff to begin exploring the neighborhood as the center of a new RPP Area.

SFMTA began by collaborating closely with the Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association on crafting an outreach process that included an interactive survey, data collection, and focus group consultations with resident volunteers. The results of these processes led to a draft proposal that, after input before and during two community meetings in 2021, became the final version of the Hayes Valley Parking and Curb Management Plan. This plan included:

- Creating a new RPP Area HV from parts of RPP Area R, RPP Area S, and neighborhood areas not part of either RPP Area
- Implementing a one-permit-per-driver, two-permit-per-household in the new RPP Area
- Installing Pay or Permit Parking on 55[5] blockfaces covering 514 spaces
- Converting two-hour parking to 9am-9pm Monday-Saturday, the same time limits as Pay or Permit
- Adding general metered parking on four blockfaces
- Additional loading zones on and around Hayes Street

The Pay or Permit blockfaces were selected after consultation with the Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association as well as preliminary analysis of the data collected. These blocks were selected due to a mix of land uses and proximities to parking attractors. Pay or Permit Parking was also placed around a large parcel that previously was not a part of an RPP Area to ensure that the parking near this major new addition to the RPP Area is well-managed.

---

[5] This number may differ from others previously published as it considers a blockface bisected by an alley as two separate blockfaces.
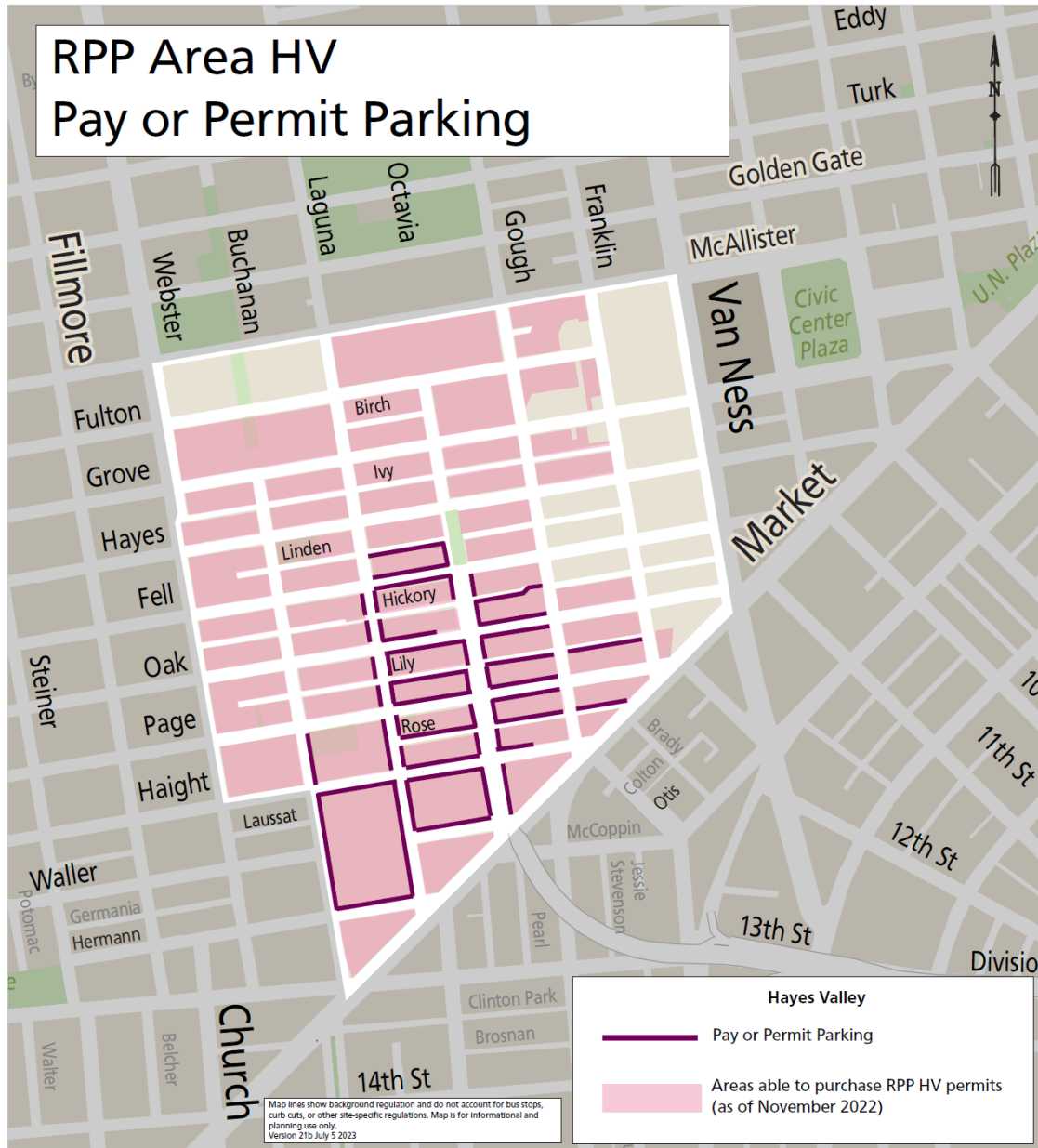
Final Plan and Implementation

The plan passed the SFMTA Board of Directors in July 2021. Due to supply chain issues, a desire to coordinate sign installations with meter installations, and the installation schedule of SFMTA's new multi-space paystations, implementation of the plan largely took place in 2022. Residents of the new RPP Area who were not part of Area R or Area S previously could purchase permits beginning on April 1, while existing permits and accounts were transitioned during that summer. Installation of signs for the non-Pay or Permit sections of Hayes Valley began in August and installation of Pay or Permit meters and signs began in September. Enforcement on most of the regulations began on November 14, 2022, with some installation work, including loading changes on Hayes Street, concluding in early 2023.

In the first few months of operations, SFMTA staff has worked with operations staff to ensure a smooth rollout of the area. SFMTA has received few complaints and the paystations are operating as intended. This plan will

allow the Agency to learn more about the new regulations through a robust data collection and evaluation process.

Data Collection

At the core of evaluating the efficacy of Pay or Permit parking in Hayes Valley will be collecting data. SFMTA has engaged a contractor to conduct field data collection while SFMTA's Residential Parking Policy team will manage the project, analyze the data, and collect required data from internal sources.

Occupancy Data

One of the main goals of implementing Pay or Permit parking is improving the availability of parking for residents and visitors to the neighborhood. As such, the primary data that will be collected will be parking occupancy data.

The parking occupancy for a given blockface is calculated by comparing the number of parked cars on a given block to the number of spaces. As the previous two-hour RPP spaces and the current Pay or Permit spaces are unmarked, parking space counts are estimates of the capacity based on how vehicles have parked on the curb, not actual counts of physically marked spaces.

When collecting occupancy data, SFMTA also will ascertain information about parked vehicles. License plate data will provide information to be cross-checked against two data sources: the list of valid RPP Area HV permits and the list of partially anonymized license plates that have purchased parking for a given block at the time of the original data collection.

Times and Days of Collection

Pay or Permit parking is enforced Monday through Saturday, 9am to 9pm. Based on previous data collection efforts, SFMTA expects parking behavior to be different between the midday and evening hours as well as between weekdays and Saturdays. As such, SFMTA will collect parking data in July on a Wednesday, Thursday and on a Saturday, four times each day at approximately 5am, 10am, 2pm and 7pm making sure there are no major events that would result in abnormal parking behavior within the project area. Furthermore, Hayes Valley streets are subject to street cleaning one day a week, usually in the morning. Because parking is banned during the street cleaning window, it affects parking demand not just for that two-hour time period but also for some time leading up to street cleaning. Therefore, the Wednesday and Thursday routes were chosen to cover the entirety of Pay or Permit Parking in the neighborhood without collecting on a day that a particular blockface has street sweeping. There will also be data analysis value in collecting that morning, afternoon, and evening data on the same day as each other. This will allow SFMTA to analyze how long vehicles are remaining parked on a given block.

Location of Data Collection

Data collection will be focused on the blockfaces where Pay or Permit regulations have been implemented. A map of those blockfaces is included at the end of this document. In the course of collecting data on those blockfaces, data collection technicians may also collect data on nearby blocks. While most comparison data will be longitudinal (i.e., comparing 2023 conditions to 2019/2020 conditions), it will be beneficial to collect and analyze data from other nearby blocks as well.

Method of Collection

Occupancy data will primarily be collected on foot, with staff walking the streets that are subject to data collection and manually entering in the data. Since SFMTA's Residential Parking Permit program now relies on digital permits as opposed to physical Residential Parking Permit decals, surveyors will need to record license plate numbers in order to determine which vehicles have valid permits. SFMTA will provide the consultant with the list of license plates that have active permits.

Non-Occupancy Data

In addition to the occupancy data collected, SFMTA will use other resources to help determine the efficacy of the Pay or Permit regulation in the neighborhood. These include:
- Meter revenue data
- Meter payment data (i.e., individual payments)
- Citation data
- Citation protest data
- Installation and maintenance costs

These data will be collected from internal sources and analyzed, cleaned, anonymized where necessary, and mapped and serve as a companion to the occupancy data.

Performance Metrics

Primary Metrics

The Hayes Valley Pay or Permit Evaluation will collect many different types of data about how the new regulation type is impacting parking in the neighborhood. However, two principal metrics tell the story of Pay or Permit Parking: occupancy percentage and the percentage of non-permitted vehicles. These two metrics combined will give SFMTA the best understanding of how successful Pay or Permit has been in Hayes Valley, and what traits to look for on blocks across the City for further Pay or Permit expansion.

Occupancy percentage

One of the primary goals of Pay or Permit Parking, and parking regulation generally, is to ensure parking availability for those who need it. Ideally, vehicles should not be spending several minutes circling their destination looking for a place to park. Prior to the implementation of Pay or Permit Parking on the blocks that have been converted to this regulation, parking was scarce, which made things difficult for both car-owning residents as well as visitors driving to the neighborhood.

Ideally, there should be about one to two spaces available on any given block at any time. Occupancy rates above 90% suggest that the regulations do not do an effective enough job of handling demand. Occupancy rates at or below 60% suggest that the regulations are too stringent, especially if nearby blocks with lighter regulations show higher occupancy percentages.

Percentage of non-permitted vehicles

Beyond looking at how many vehicles are parked at the curb, it will be important to know what type of vehicles these are. If the rate of non-permitted vehicles on a given block is lower after the implementation of Pay or Permit parking, that likely means the regulation is doing a good job of maintaining availability for residents. However, if the percentage of non-permitted vehicles on a given block goes down too far, it may lead to a situation where SFMTA is losing money on these blocks due to the cost of maintenance of the paystations not being recouped by paying customers.

This metric can also shed light on the causes of high occupancy, and the appropriate regulation, on a given block. If a block has 100% parking occupancy and the parked vehicles are primarily non-permitted, it may call for an adjustment to meter rates or policies. If the non-permitted vehicle percentage is low, then managing residential demand may be more important.

Secondary Metrics

Length of stay

In situations where availability is high, length of stay is less important, but where parking spaces are difficult for drivers to find, comparing vehicles across the course of a day shows what percentage of vehicles stayed for most of or all of that day will be important in helping to diagnose what is contributing to low availability. This will be beneficial in understanding the habits of visitors and can inform decisions about how to price parking in RPP Areas and can lead to further research about the relationship between land use and parking length.

Revenue

Though parking management is about more than revenue collection, it will be important for SFMTA decisionmakers to have an understanding of the fiscal impact, positive or negative, this Pay or Permit installation has and what any future installations could have. This will require comparing the total gross revenue from meters and comparing it to the cost of installing and maintaining the meters to come up with a net revenue figure for the area. While the gross revenue for Pay or Permit will be significantly higher than it would be for time-limited RPP blocks, which generate no revenue outside of citations, it may not be high enough to justify the installation of meters, especially if the percentage of vehicles paying a meter is relatively low. Conversely, if revenue is high, Pay or Permit could be a way to better the Agency's financial situation while not placing an extra burden on residents who park close to home.

Payment compliance

Occupancy data can be paired with real-time payment data to determine what percentage of vehicles who should be paying to park actually are paying to park. This metric of payment compliance can be compared with payment compliance in traditional metered areas to determine if Pay or Permit environments are less, more, or equally conducive to parking payment activity.

Citation volume, protest rate, and protest success rate

In addition to understanding the efficacy of SFMTA's regulations, the Agency wants to make sure those regulations are well-understood by the public and implemented in a way that can be enforced by parking control officers. By looking at the rate of citations relative to the data-observed rates of non-compliance, SFMTA can draw conclusions about how well enforcement officers are handling the Pay or Permit regulation. Furthermore, by comparing citation protests and their success relative to other metered or RPP parts of the City, the Agency can get a data-driven snapshot of how often drivers feel like they are being ticketed incorrectly. This information will inform potential signage upgrades, and discussions with SFMTA's hearings division to ensure hearing officers understand the regulation and how it has been implemented.

Outcomes

Possible Changes in Hayes Valley

Pay or Permit Parking may have a profound impact on parking behavior in Hayes Valley. The intent of the program is to improve parking availability and livability, but it is possible the data will show that tweaks could be made to improve the program's impacts. These changes could include:
- Converting some blocks from Pay or Permit to general metered parking
- An expansion of operating hours of either the Pay or Permit parking or nearby general meters
- Additional signage to better communicate the parking regulations to the public
- Additional outreach to residents, businesses, and parkers
- Expanding the blocks within Hayes Valley that have Pay or Permit

Operational changes would be conducted in consultations with the Meter Shop, Sign Shop, and other relevant divisions. Any major regulatory changes would only happen after the conclusion of the evaluation process and after consultation with community partners and residents affected by those changes.

Pay or Permit Expansion

In addition to updates to the Pay or Permit installation in Area HV, SFMTA intends to use the data collected to inform expansion of Pay or Permit to other parts of the City. This process will involve conducting data collection in neighborhoods currently with Residential Permit Parking with high parking demand, both from residential and non-residential sources. Once neighborhoods with parking demand profiles that match the metrics SFMTA is looking for are identified, staff will connect with community groups and residents to discuss adding Pay or Permit Parking to those neighborhoods.

The timeline and rate at which these new Pay or Permit installations happen depends on a variety of factors. Under current state law, paid parking requires the installation of physical paystations. In 2023, SFMTA applied for and received a Local Parking Management Program Implementation grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) for nearly $1,500,000 to purchase 268 paystations for the purpose of Pay or Permit expansion. SFMTA will conduct data collection, outreach, and planning for these future installations. Additionally, residents will have to be willing to welcome Pay or Permit Parking into their neighborhood, as residential support will be a key prerequisite for SFMTA Board of Directors approval. These community conversations, much like the conversation in Hayes Valley, will be focused on data and how Pay or Permit Parking can help improve parking availability in a given area. Ultimately, the results of the Pay or Permit Evaluation will play a central role in defining where and when Pay or Permit Parking expands.