On-Street Parking Pricing Policies

On-street parking meters, off-street parking lots, special events, motorcycles, and Pay or Permit blocks

Curb Management Team
Parking & Curb Management Group
Streets Division

February 2, 2021

SFMTA

Context, goals and strategies

Vision and goals

Effective parking management is central to the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency's (SFMTA) Strategic Plan. Goal 2 of the Strategic Plan—"Make transit and other sustainable modes of transportation the most attractive and preferred means of travel"—contains Objective 2.3: "Manage congestion and parking demand to support the Transit First Policy."

In keeping with that Agency objective, the SFMTA's vision and related goals for parking in San Francisco include:

- <u>Make it easy to find parking</u> – Use parking prices to manage demand for parking and thereby achieve a target level of parking availability.
- <u>Ensure a target level of parking availability to achieve SFMTA's other goals</u> – Making it easy for drivers to quickly find an available parking space will improve safety, Muni performance, and customer experience while reducing double parking, circling, emissions, and parking-related congestion.
- <u>Use parking prices to encourage the use of transit, walking, and biking</u> – Managing demand for parking will provide an incentive for people to use means other than driving.
- <u>Provide a clear, simple, and respectful customer experience</u> – Improve customer service, experience, and convenience when using the SFMTA's parking system.
- <u>Transparent process</u> – Have a transparent, consistent, rules-based, and data-driven approach for setting parking rates.

Overall approach and strategies

The SFMTA uses the following approach and strategies to manage demand for paid parking to achieve various goals:

- <u>Demand-responsive pricing</u> – The SFMTA uses data for parking occupancy to find the lowest rate possible to achieve a target level of availability.
- <u>Operational hours are split into distinct rate periods or time bands</u> – Parking demand changes by day of week and time of day. To better match prices with demand over time, the SFMTA adjusts prices by time of day and whether weekday or weekend. Across all blocks, lots and garages, the day is divided into consistent time bands so that drivers can readily compare rates, helping prices be more effective.
- <u>Location</u> – In a city as dynamic and dense as San Francisco, parking demand also changes not just by time and day but also block to block. To address this varying demand, the SFMTA varies parking rates by block.
- <u>Consistency</u> – The SFMTA wants its approach to parking management to be as easy to understand as possible. While prices vary by block and time of day, the SFMTA uses a consistent and transparent methodology to set those prices.

On-street parking pricing policies

Transportation Code authority

The San Francisco Transportation Code provides authority to the SFMTA to adjust rates at parking meters within its jurisdiction.

- Section 401 authorizes the Director of Transportation to set parking meter rates.
- Section 402 sets a minimum rate of $0.50/hour and a maximum rate of $8.00/hour for car parking spaces, and allows rates to be adjusted periodically based on demand.
- Section 403 sets a minimum and maximum parking rate for motorcycle parking spaces as one-fifth of the minimum and maximum rates for car parking spaces, and allows motorcycle rates to be adjusted periodically based on demand.
- Section 405 describes special event parking areas, sets a minimum special event parking rate of $0.50/hour and a maximum special event parking rate of $18.00/hour, describes the conditions when special event parking rates may be charged, and allows for special event parking rates to be adjusted periodically based on demand.

When pricing is used

The SFMTA uses prices at on-street parking spaces to manage parking demand in commercial and mixed use areas when and where parking demand is high and/or when places of business are open. Currently:

- Most SFMTA parking meters in the City operate Monday through Saturday, from 7am to 6pm or 9am to 6pm.
- Meters in Fisherman's Wharf operate every day, from 7am to 7pm
- Meters near Oracle Park and Chase Center operate until 10pm Monday through Saturday, and on Sundays during special events at the ballpark.
- Meters on 18th Street in the Potrero Hill neighborhood operate Monday through Saturday, from 9am to 10pm.
- Meters in areas administered by the Port of San Francisco (mostly along the Embarcadero and portions of Mission Bay) are operational every day from 7am to 10pm or 11pm.

How pricing varies: block by block, time of day, and weekday v. weekend

To better match prices with how demand changes over time, the SFMTA adjusts prices by time of day and day of week (e.g. weekday versus weekend). While more granular or dynamic approaches to pricing are possible, this demand-responsive approach strikes a good balance with the competing demand of making prices easy to understand and easy to communicate at a parking meter. The rate periods are as consistent as possible across meters, lots and garages, which increases ease of use for drivers when parking in different parts of the City.

Block-by-block

Price changes at meters are made on a per-block basis. A block includes both sides of the street. On most streets and blocks in San Francisco, demand is fairly consistent between one side of the block (a blockface)

and the other. Changing prices on a block-by-block basis helps to redistribute parking demand within a neighborhood to better achieve availability targets and therefore achieve overall parking management goals.

Time of day

To vary rates by time of day, the SFMTA divides the day into the following rate periods or time bands based on both demand data and the desire to have a consistent approach throughout the City. If necessary, SFMTA staff may adjust the time bands to better manage parking demand.

Open-Noon
Noon-3pm
3-6pm
6pm-close

As an example, meters in Fisherman's Wharf operate every day from 7am to 7pm, and would have the following time bands:

7am-Noon
Noon-3pm
3-6pm
6-7pm

If drivers arrive at a meter during one rate period but leave during another, they must pay the correct hourly rates for each rate period in which they park. Thus, a driver who arrives at a meter at 11:30am and wishes to park until 1pm must pay for 30 minutes at the Open-Noon rate, and 60 minutes at Noon-3pm rate.

Weekday v. weekend

Because parking demand on weekend days often differs significantly from weekday parking demand, Monday-Friday rates may differ from Saturday (and, in limited cases, Sunday) rates. If parking demand data merits, SFMTA staff may adjust how days of the week are grouped together to help pricing be more effective (e.g., if in some areas parking demand on Fridays is more similar to Saturday than it is to other weekdays, SFMTA may adjust pricing on Fridays and Saturdays together).

On-street metered parking and metered lots

The SFMTA adjusts rates at metered parking gradually and periodically based on demand. The minimum rate that may be charged is $0.50 per hour, while the maximum is $8 per hour. Rates at commercial loading (yellow and red) meters, short-term parking (green) meters, and tour bus meters are adjusted using the occupancy at general metered parking spaces. Citywide changes to the metered parking rates may be made no more often than once every four weeks, and typically are made once per quarter.

In order to achieve the goal of at least one available parking space per block or lot, meter rates are adjusted with the goal of maintaining no more than 80% occupancy on any given block or lot. Rates are adjusted using the following formula:

- When occupancy is 80 percent or above, the hourly rate is raised by $0.25.
- When occupancy is 60 percent or above but below 80 percent, the hourly rate is not changed.
- When occupancy is below 60 percent, the hourly rate is lowered by $0.25.

A map of current rates at SFMTA parking meters and metered lots is posted on the SFMTA's website.

Special event pricing

The SFMTA uses special event rates at on-street spaces in areas near large, well-publicized events that generate significant short-term increases in the demand for parking. Transportation Code, Division II, Section 405 defines a special event as "athletic events, concerts, conventions, parades, street festivals, entertainment or cultural exhibitions or shows, or any other similar event that is expected to generate a significant, short-term demand for on-street parking." In these designated special event areas, meter rates may be up to $18 per hour during, or up to four hours prior to, special events.

SFMTA staff determines rates for particular events based on the parking demand the event is expected to generate. Special event rates may vary by block or larger geographic areas.

Currently, the SFMTA charges special event rates in an area around Oracle Park (home of the San Francisco Giants) and the Chase Center (home of the Golden State Warriors). Special event rates of $7.00/hour apply for events expected to generate significant parking and transportation demand. Special event rates apply in the hours before, during, and after an event, as follows:

Event start time	Event rate hours in effect
Monday-Saturday between Noon and 3pm	Noon to 6pm
Monday-Saturday between 3pm and 6pm	3pm to 10pm
Monday-Saturday after 6pm	6pm to 10pm
Sunday between Noon and 3pm	Noon to 6pm
Sunday between 3pm and 6pm	3pm to 6pm

Special event rates may apply as late as 10:00pm Monday through Saturday, and may apply on Sundays as late as 6:00pm. Meter payment is not required at meters in SFMTA jurisdiction, but is required at some meters in Port jurisdiction, on Sundays that do not feature an event.

Special event rates do not apply to motorcycle meters.

Meter screens inform users of that day's rate schedule, including special event rates, and distinctive signs indicate which blocks are subject to special event pricing. The SFMTA posts special event areas and rates on its website.

Figure 1.1: SFMTA Special Event Area parking sign

Metered motorcycle pricing

The SFMTA uses demand-responsive pricing for metered motorcycle parking in order to achieve availability targets using the same block-by-block, day-of-week, and time-of-day basis described above. The minimum and maximum rates to be charged at motorcycle meters are one-fifth of the minimum and maximum rates set for car meters.

The SFMTA may use the following formulas to determine price changes at motorcycle spaces:

- When occupancy is 80 percent or above, the hourly rate is raised by $0.10.
- When occupancy is 60 or above but below 80 percent, the hourly rate is not changed.
- When occupancy is below 60 percent, the hourly rate is lowered by $0.10.

SFMTA may change rates at motorcycle meters no more frequently than every four weeks, but in practice the SFMTA has not adjusted motorcycle rates in several years.

If new motorcycle meters are added, the starting rates at those new meters will be based on the rate of the nearest pod of motorcycle meters.

Rates at newly added parking meters

In some cases, starting rates for new meters will be determined in consultation with local stakeholders. When the starting rates have not been determined through stakeholder outreach, the SFMTA sets rates at new meters as follows:

- Determine average rates, by time band and by weekday v. weekend, for one block in each direction of the newly added block or set of blocks;
- Round the average rates to the nearest $0.25 for each time band, and weekday v. weekend; and

- Apply those rounded average rates to the newly metered block or set of blocks.

Pay or Permit parking areas

Pay or Permit parking regulation adoption

Pay or Permit parking is authorized by San Francisco Transportation Code, Division II, Section 905(b)(2), which states:

> Any vehicle that displays a valid Residential Parking Permit shall be exempt from payment at on-street Parking Meters, as required by Division I, Section 7.2.23 (Payment of Parking Meter), located in a Residential Parking Permit Area where designated by the SFMTA with posted signs.

Pay or Permit parking definition

Pay or Permit parking requires payment for parking by visitors, while exempting from payment any vehicles that display a valid Residential Parking Permit (RPP) sticker on specific blocks located in the RPP area where designated by the SFMTA with posted signs.

In most cases, Pay or Permit parking will have no time limit for visitors (just as in RPP areas, where vehicles that display a valid RPP sticker do not have a time limit in Pay or Permit areas). While residents with a valid RPP sticker for the designated RPP Area are not restricted by parking time limits or required to pay to park, anyone without a valid RPP sticker for the designated RPP Area is required to pay at the meter for the entire duration of their stay. Pay or Permit parking does not entitle an RPP sticker holder to parking for free at any meter in the City, or even any meter in or adjacent to the RPP Area; rather, it exempts RPP sticker holders from meter payment only on blocks where posted signs indicate that vehicles with valid RPP sticker holders for a designated RPP Area need not pay the meter. See an example of a Pay or Permit parking sign in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2

Goals of Pay or Permit parking

Some areas, blocks, or groups of blocks may not be best served exclusively by parking meters or traditional RPP regulations, especially areas with a mix of land-uses, where residential, employee and visitor parking demand exist simultaneously. Pay or Permit parking is intended to provide flexibility needed by visitors and customers of nearby commercial establishments, who may stay longer than the two-hour limit typically used in RPP Areas as long as they pay for this convenience. Experience with paid parking in San Francisco indicates that pricing parking can be as effective, if not more effective, than time limits in discouraging non-residents from storing their vehicles for long periods of time, which improves parking availability for residents and visitors.

Rate adjustment procedure

The SFMTA uses demand-responsive pricing for Pay or Permit parking in order to achieve availability targets using the same block-by-block, day-of-week, and time-of-day basis as for traditional metered blocks.