



Muni Metro Core Capacity Study Community Working Group

Thursday, November 16, 2023, 6:00 p.m.

Microsoft Teams meeting

Meeting Summary

1. Community Working Group member introductions
2. SFMTA presentation
3. Discussion

- a. Comment: Passengers often prefer to sit near the operator for security and may be wary of 3-4 car trains.
- b. Comment: Asked for improved customer information about escalator and elevator outages.
 - i. SFMTA answer: That is something the project team can pass along to staff who manage those systems.
- c. Question: Will the study include vehicles longer than the current fleet?
 - i. SFMTA answer: The study may look into that, which might be beneficial in places where there isn't room for a full additional car.
- d. Question: Would it be possible to have reconfigurable interiors on trains with more standing room at peak and more seats off-peak?
 - i. SFMTA answer: That is something the study can look into. When designing the new fleet, there was an effort to have fewer seats due to high ridership. Now, SFMTA is testing some with more seats.
- e. Comment: Even with current two-car trains, passengers often have to step off the train directly into traffic.
 - i. SFMTA answer: Needing to lengthen platforms is a tradeoff for longer trains and improved safety. The current L Taraval project added or lengthened platforms at many stops to address this issue, for example.
- f. Question: A surface-only K/L route was tried in 2020 and had been tried before, and both times the change was reversed. Are there lessons learned from those past service changes?
 - i. SFMTA answer: We will explore the possibility of surface-only routes in our long range study. We'd look at several different possibilities, not just this one. We heard concerns about additional travel time, accessibility of the transfers, and the inconvenience of switching vehicles and boarding locations. We would look for strategies to mitigate those as we look at the idea of surface-only routes.
- g. Comment: There had been attempts at a K/L service before, and having five lines converge in the subway has long caused operational problems. It was based more on fiscal considerations in the 1950s than operational considerations. In the 1960s-

1970s there was lots of research on what to do with the then-future Market Street subway and how to improve operations of having so many lines feeding into one trunk line that was a choke point. One proposal was for a West Portal Avenue subway to SF State. It was approved by a majority of voters, but not the 2/3 margin required for a bond issue.

- i. SFMTA reply: Note that the capacity analysis presented at tonight’s meeting did not assume specific lines being restructured, as the study has not progressed to that point, but simply calculated the capacity benefit associated with the number of additional cars in the subway due to longer trains replacing shorter ones. That is, the capacity benefits shown would apply regardless of which line(s) are converted to surface only.
- h. Comment: Current ridership varies by day of week due to workers with hybrid schedules often working from home on Mondays and Fridays.
 - i. SFMTA answer: Even pre-pandemic, the SFMTA used midweek data for this type of planning analysis because there was always a difference on those days (which is now more pronounced) but agreed there is a need for additional attention to how commute patterns are evolving.
- i. Question: What trends for downtown usage were assumed in this analysis?
 - i. SFMTA answer: The model assumes a mostly full return on the 2050 time horizon. Because this is a long-term study, the city expects that downtown will return to being a major destination as business cycles pass and uses change.
- j. Question: Has the team talked to businesses or riders about this work?
 - i. SFMTA answer: A Muni rail rider focus group will be done later in the study, as well as additional outreach in subsequent phases.
- k. Question: Is there a timeline of when the Muni Metro system reaches various capacity points, and will a sensitivity analysis be done? What does the SF CHAMP do well, and what does it not do well? The N Judah forecasts change dramatically on the segments from east to west of 19th Avenue –should there should be more gradation?
 - i. SFMTA answer: The SFMTA has additional forecasts including a 2035 scenario, which shows that the N Judah is among the first segments to go over capacity. SF-CHAMP data is stop by stop; it was aggregated into segments for this analysis.
 - ii. SFMTA reply: SF-CHAMP is one of the most sophisticated models of its type and represents the transit system in detail. Travel models lack the ability to be highly accurate on long time horizons like ours, but they are typically good at showing relative change between different scenarios, given assumed land use changes.
 - iii. SFMTA reply: The SFMTA is still crunching numbers on some parts. SF-CHAMP has a tendency to overestimate T ridership and indicates possible

crowding on the northern portion of the line in the 2050 Business as Usual scenario. The study is working on balancing that with observed Central Subway ridership. The Muni Forward group is also currently doing a speed and reliability study on the T.

- l. Comment: Muni Metro ridership growth is expected because of population growth. Although there are tradeoffs for longer platforms, there isn't space for additional people to be in cars.
- m. Question: Because the N Judah is the busiest line, it is unlikely to be a surface-only line. Would longer trains be an S Shuttle to West Portal, or to SF State? If restructuring occurred, would stations be rebuilt for improved transfers?
 - i. SFMTA answer: The proposal would be for longer trains as far as SF State, since significant growth is anticipated along 19th Avenue and since the existing 19th Avenue land uses, like SF State, generate significant all day demand (as compared to peak hour commute demand). Church and West Portal were not built as transfer stations; the advantage of this longer-term study is, if service restructuring concepts are advanced, there would be time to plan for significant station enhancements at any future transfer points to make transfers easier and more accessible.
- n. Question: How does the study interact with other projects, especially a proposed Geary/19th Avenue subway, due to the long timeline?
 - i. SFMTA answer: The ConnectSF Transit Strategy looked at Muni Metro Modernization, Central Subway extension, a Bayview Caltrain station, and Geary/19th subway together. Geary/19th would be a second spine for system; riders on the westside may choose to transfer at 19th Avenue if it provided a faster trip downtown. It would provide resiliency with the Market Street Subway.
- o. Question: Coupling helped in the 1980s and 1990s because of limitations of the original train control system. Would it be possible for two 2-car trains to use a platform at the same time?
 - i. SFMTA answer: The new signal system will allow for about 42 trains per hour, up from the 30 that can currently be operated without delays. The time it takes to couple trains becomes the limiting factor.
 - ii. SFMTA reply: Two trains still use two "slots" in the subway, even if they stop at the same platform at the same time.
 - iii. SFMTA reply: The system can only operate trains so close together.
- p. Question: Is there a capacity "sweet spot" that the study is aiming for?
 - i. SFMTA reply: Planning capacity is 85% of maximum capacity, which provides a margin in case of delays or variations in demand.
- q. Question: Would the possible realignment at Parkmerced affect the study?

- i. SFMTA answer: The team is tracking that plan closely. It creates the potential for branching, but wouldn't affect the overall capacity forecasts shown tonight.
- r. Question: Could a surface-only line could run on Market Street?
 - i. SFMTA answer: That's an interesting idea that has come up before. It would alleviate the drawback of needing a transfer to reach downtown if a line is converted to surface-only, though it would add complexity as the overhead wiring and lanes on Market Street are used for both buses and streetcars.
- s. Question: Member would love a Portola streetcar. Is another tunnel from the westside to downtown possible?
 - i. SFMTA answer: The scope of this project is upgrades for additional capacity and does not include new lines. ConnectSF does prioritize potential additional tunnels, notably the Geary/19th subway.
- t. Question: Is planning capacity all seats taken, or standing room only?
 - i. SFMTA answer: Planning capacity is 85% of the car full with standees. At 85%, not everybody has a seat, but no one will be squashed at that capacity level, and there is some room to accommodate variations in demand.
- u. Comment: Member requested that the team integrate a study on using historic streetcars on the J Church (extended to downtown via Market Street) into this effort. Member sent everyone a link to Market Street Railway articles on Muni Metro construction and history as background.
 - i. SFMTA answer: The team is coordinating with all other efforts in the Transit Planning group, particularly Muni Forward. We would look into the idea of using historic and/or modern streetcars for surface operations.

4. Adjourn