



# MINUTES

## **San Francisco County Transportation Authority**

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

### **1. Roll Call**

Chair Melgar called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

**Present at Roll Call:** Commissioners Chan, Chen, Dorsey, Engardio, Fielder, Mahmood, Mandelman, Melgar, Sauter, Sherrill, and Walton (11)

**Absent at Roll Call:** 0

### **2. Chair's Report - INFORMATION**

Chair Melgar thanked BART for completing the installation of new fare gates at all downtown San Francisco stations and a canopy at Embarcadero Station before the NBA All-Star Weekend and the Chinese New Year Parade. She thanked Vice Chair Sauter for speaking at the event, which was attended by Commissioner Chen, BART Directors Janice Li, Edward Wright, and community members.

She stated that the new fare gates improved station security and marked the first major capital project funded by the Prop L sales tax fund that was in public use. She thanked the Transportation Authority Board for allocating \$12.5 million for the equipment.

Chair Melgar stated that the Mission stations also had been completed, and the Glen Park and Balboa stations were scheduled for completion later in the year.

Chair Melgar announced that the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) recommended a \$25 million Regional Measure 3 (RM3) Safe Routes to Transit & Bay Trail grant for the Multimodal Bay Skyway, including the Yerba Buena Island Multi-Use Path. She said the full Commission would vote on the award later in the week, marking her first meeting as an MTC Commissioner. She thanked her colleagues for the appointment and thanked MTC, Caltrans, and other partners working to secure state and federal funding to complete the transformative Bay Skyway project.

Chair Melgar stated that MTC's Chief Deputy Executive Director Alix Bockelman and SFMTA Director Julie Kirschbaum were present to share the results of a regional survey regarding a potential multi-county transportation revenue measure to stabilize transit and SFMTA's financial outlook, respectively. She said she looked forward to working with both of them to support the critical conversation at the regional and local level on transit operating funding. She also expressed appreciation for the support and leadership of Senators Wiener and Arregu who are working with their colleagues on statewide solutions.

Chair Melgar stated that MTC's Chief Deputy Executive Director, Alix Bockelman, and SFMTA Director, Julie Kirschbaum, were there to present on a regional survey regarding



a potential multi-county transportation revenue measure and SFMTA's financial outlook. She emphasized the importance of regional and local discussions on transit funding and expressed appreciation for the leadership of Senators Wiener and Arreguín in pursuing statewide solutions.

Chair Melgar thanked President Mandelman for collaborating with her and other community and civic leaders on the Muni Funding Working Group. She stated that the group, facilitated by the SFMTA and Controller's Office, had been diligently discussing revenue and non-revenue strategies to address Muni's funding needs. She reaffirmed her commitment to strengthening Muni funding and closing the gap equitably while maintaining transit service levels.

Chair Melgar congratulated Director Kirschbaum on her appointment as the permanent Director of SFMTA and commended her leadership during a critical period. Chair Melgar restated her commitment to collaborating with Director Kirschbaum, the Transportation Authority Board, and Mayor Lurie to stabilize and strengthen Muni's finances and services, emphasizing its vital role in the city's recovery and daily connectivity.

During public comment, a commenter stated he was dissatisfied with the transportation agencies.

### **3. Executive Director's Report - INFORMATION**

Tilly Chang, Executive Director, presented the Executive Director's Report.

During public comment, a commenter stated he was dissatisfied with Vision Zero.

### **4. Approve the Minutes of the February 11, 2025 Meeting - ACTION**

There was no public comment.

Commissioner Mandelman moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Dorsey.

The minutes were approved without objection by the following vote:

Ayes: Commissioners Chan, Chen, Dorsey, Engardio, Fielder, Mahmood, Mandelman, Melgar, Sauter, Sherrill, and Walton (11)

Absent: 0

## **Consent Agenda**

### **5. [Final Approval] Appoint Jerry Levine as the District 2 Representative to the Community Advisory Committee - ACTION**

### **6. [Final Approval] Allocate \$5,284,000 in Prop L Funds, with Conditions, for Five Requests - ACTION**

Projects: Prop L: PCJPB: Predictive Arrival/Departure System (\$2,400,000). SFMTA: Bicycle Facility Maintenance (\$459,000), Duboce Triangle Slow Streets Study [NTP] (\$250,000), Lincoln Way Traffic Signals [NTP] (\$500,000). SFPW: Curb Ramps and Subsidewalk Basements No. 3 (\$1,675,000).



- 7. [Final Approval] Approval of the 2025 State and Federal Advocacy Program - ACTION**
- 8. [Final Approval] Adopt Fiscal Year 2025/26 Transportation Fund for Clean Air Local Expenditure Criteria - ACTION**

There was no public comment.

Commissioner Mahmood moved to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Commissioner Mandelman.

The Consent Agenda approved without objection by the following vote:

Ayes: Commissioners Chan, Chen, Dorsey, Engardio, Fielder, Mahmood, Mandelman, Melgar, Sauter, Sherrill, and Walton (11)

Absent: 0

## **End of Consent Agenda**

### **9. Regional Transportation Revenue Measure Polling Results - INFORMATION**

Maria Lombardo, Chief Deputy Director for SFCTA, introduced the item. She then introduced Alix Bockelman, Chief Deputy Executive Director for MTC and Ruth Bernstein, CEO & President of EMC Research who presented the item.

Commissioner Chan stated that she agreed with a regional measure that included four counties and not nine counties, noting that nine counties would be more challenging. She stated that counties like Sonoma, which lack transit services, might question whether they should vote for a measure. She requested clarification on the selection of the four specific counties and the rationale behind implementing both a parcel tax and a sales tax for the nine-county model instead of choosing one over the other.

Ms. Bockelman stated that the proposal came from the Transportation Revenue Select Committee, which met from June to October. She said that during that time, they collaborated with stakeholders and MTC Commissioners to assess regional transportation needs, identifying that BART, Muni, and Caltrain had the largest funding deficits and primarily operated in four counties. She said that due to the urgent transit funding crisis, the proposal prioritized a short-term solution targeting these counties, which already relied heavily on local measures for transportation funding. She added that the committee had considered a variable tax rate, with San Francisco having a higher rate due to Muni's greater needs, which was proposed by a transit operator workgroup led by SFMTA. She said that in response to stakeholder and advocate interest, the committee also explored a nine-county measure for a 30-year period that would fund broader transportation needs beyond transit operations through a half-cent sales tax and a parcel tax.

Commissioner Chan noted that while the poll had measured voter approval for sales and parcel taxes to fund transit and capital improvements, it had not extensively explored measures beyond sales taxes. She asked if there had been discussions on alternative tax structures that were less regressive and more voter-acceptable.

Ms. Bockelman stated they had conducted a poll over a year prior to assess tax mechanisms, including an assessment of political feasibility. She stated that any new tax measure would need support from local officials, Sacramento representatives, and voters.



Ms. Bernstein confirmed they had considered both sales and income taxes and that polling showed relatively little difference in voter support.

Commissioner Chan said she appreciated the extensive research effort and clarified that her comments were about San Francisco's fiscal realities, not EMC Research or its findings. She stated that the City and County of San Francisco was already facing significant financial challenges, including budget and revenue deficits, and she cautioned that introducing new tax measures in the next two fiscal years would be difficult. She also highlighted the complexities of revenue projections and that Proposition M, a newly passed business tax reform, further complicated the tax climate.

Commissioner Chan expressed concerns regarding the decline in San Francisco's sales tax revenue. She noted tax revenues had not yet rebounded to 2016 or 2019 levels, with 2019 being the last peak. She voiced strong reservations about the current tax landscape given these uncertainties.

Commissioner Mahmood asked about the poll results, seeking clarity on the poll's messaging and the tax framework's effectiveness over time. He referenced the finding of 56-57% support and requested data on support levels among regular riders compared to non-riders for the proposed measures.

Ms. Bernstein stated that support among frequent rider was about 70% which was higher than the two-thirds threshold, but not by much.

Commissioner Mahmood asked whether consideration had been given to how this measure might be impacted by ballot timing and voter turnout.

Ms. Bernstein stated that whether they calibrated the poll results for a high-turnout election like November 2026 or a lower-turnout election like November 2028, if transit riders comprised 20-25% of the vote, a 1-2% turnout fluctuation would have minimal impact.

Commissioner Mahmood noted that another slide addressed general transportation priorities, including safety and potholes. He asked what the top issues were for respondents.

Ms. Bernstein stated that the data analysis was still in progress but preliminary findings indicated that key concerns centered on improving transit accessibility and reliability, particularly for those who depend on it. She clarified that potholes were not the primary factor driving support and that variations in survey questions across different geographic areas added complexity. Given these uncertainties, she said they were hesitant to determine which factors would enhance support. She noted that this issue would be addressed in the next phase of the process of developing a more detailed spending plan for the measure.

Vice Chair Sauter commented that he was eager to review the findings and gain further insights. He observed that support for the measure didn't change despite additional supportive information but there was a slight decline following opposition messaging. He asked why support appeared stagnant regardless of messaging.

Ms. Bernstein stated that revenue measures had become familiar to voters, who largely based decisions on values rather than specific expenditures. She said that while some voters reviewed details, most understood the general purpose, such as funding transportation, schools, and housing. She explained that additional information had little



impact since the measures maintained and improved existing services like Muni and BART rather than introducing new concepts. Acknowledging the challenge of a two-thirds majority, she said that she remained confident that support would exceed 50%.

Commissioner Fielder inquired about the feasibility of taxing rideshare services, such as Uber and Lyft, given their impact on public transportation ridership, increased traffic, and road wear. As a user of these services, she asked why such a tax had not been considered.

Ms. Bockelman stated that there might be an issue regarding who could impose that type of measure. She said that the focus was on a regional approach and revenue mechanisms aligned with the scale of the need. She stated that the smallest measure examined in the poll would generate approximately \$560 million annually, which was significantly lower than what is needed to address transit operating shortfalls.

Tilly Chang, Executive Director, agreed with Ms. Bockelman and noted the question had also arisen in the Muni Funding Working Group. She suggested further discussion of a rideshare tax at that group, noting most rideshare trips in the Bay Area occurred in San Francisco.

Chair Melgar asked where commissioners or the public could access detailed crosstabs on the proposed measure's acceptability among specific demographic groups.

Ms. Bockelman said the full report, which had been made available in the Board packet and was on the Transportation Authority's website, included this information. [Note: the full version of the report presented to the MTC on February 14<sup>th</sup> is on the website. Additional analyses, including demographic crosstabs are not yet available.]

During public comment, a commenter disagreed with the report.

Roland Lebrun stated that the property tax proposal was one based on square foot rather than one based on property value. He raised two concerns: the proposal would disproportionately affect lower-asset communities, and the parcel tax could face legal challenges for potentially bypassing Proposition 13.

A commenter agreed with Mr. Lebrun before criticizing the Transportation Authority and the SFMTA on disproportionately allocating funds to a small percentage of residents.

## **10. SFMTA Financial Update - INFORMATION**

Julie Kirschbaum, Director of Transportation at SFMTA, presented the item.

Commissioner Chan said she was happy to see the proposal to optimize enforcement, including efforts to address parking at bus stops and double parking of commercial vehicles. She asked for additional information about what other strategies SFMTA was pursuing related to garages and residential parking. She suggested SFMTA also look at seeking additional reimbursement for services it was doing for other city departments, for example towing services and crossing guards. She thanked SFMTA for reversing their proposal for cutting school crossing guards.

Commissioner Walton asked whether SFMTA was considering shifting resources from capital projects to transit operations.

Ms. Kirschbaum confirmed that was the case. She said SFMTA had been seeing instability in the fund sources for both capital projects and transit operations and that they were evaluating how to deal with that, since shifting funding between the two types of costs



was one of their only tools to address short term operating funding gaps. She noted that she would prefer not to have to take this approach since it worked against SFMTA's strategy to keep their transit fleet in a state of good repair.

Commissioner Walton asked if SFMTA could charge Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) for the use of the public right of way such as curb space and bus lanes.

Ms. Kirschbaum said the Muni Finance Working Group was considering that as a possibility for 2029 and beyond since SFMTA needed time to evaluate how they would implement it.

Commissioner Walton asked if SFMTA fined people for using scooters and bicycles on sidewalks. He said he saw a lot of that behavior.

Ms. Kirschbaum confirmed that SFMTA did fine those illegally using sidewalks and offered to follow up with additional information.

Commissioner Walton asked if SFMTA was exploring additional revenues from advertising.

Ms. Kirschbaum replied that SFMTA was always trying to optimize advertising revenue but that the revenue from SFMTA's two existing vendor contracts had not materialized so they were looking for creative ways to work with them, as well as new options to raise revenue. She stated that SFMTA was also trying to balance how it uses revenue, for instance on shelter cleaning and other customer services versus on avoiding service cuts.

Commissioner Mahmood stated that he appreciated SFMTA looking for creative avenues to minimize service cuts. He asked if SFMTA was considering expanding evening hours for paid parking during weekdays. He noted that enforcement ended at 6 p.m. in San Francisco while it ends at 10 p.m. in other cities.

Ms. Kirschbaum responded that SFMTA staff were not recommending extending meter charges on evenings or Sundays to help close the Fiscal Year 2025/26 budget deficit. She stated it would generate a relatively small amount of money and cause significant public opposition. She said that the proposal might be part of a funding package that SFMTA develops for future fiscal years.

Vice Chair Sauter said that District 3 had the lowest rates of car ownership, and he was excited about the higher ridership achieved on the 49 transit route. He stated that parking revenue had declined significantly and asked if SFMTA was pursuing ways for garages to generate more revenue in the short term. He said he appreciated Chair Melgar's resolution at the Board of Supervisors to pursue long-term development on SFMTA's parking sites.

Ms. Kirschbaum commented that SFMTA was always open to creative partnerships in their garages as long as they didn't see a decline in use. She said SFMTA was considering options such as using garages to store commercial fleets.

Vice-Chair Sauter asked how much parking revenue SFMTA received from single use parking compared to monthly or longer-term parking.

Ms. Kirschbaum responded that SFMTA tracked parking revenue closely and they could share the data with his office. She stated that there was enough capacity in SFMTA-owned garages to fulfill parking demand for both long- and short-term users.



Commissioner Fielder thanked SFMTA for following the city's sanctuary city policy. She asked what technical challenges SFMTA had faced regarding charging TNCs and other commercial vehicles.

Ms. Kirschbaum stated that in the long term SFMTA was considering how to use technology to capture the quick turnover of commercial fleets using curb space. She said that SFMTA had deemphasized some revenue measures that raised small amounts of funding in the near term because they had been insufficient to significantly address SFMTA's anticipated \$50 million funding gap in the upcoming fiscal year. She stated that the Muni Funding Working Group had been looking at both large and small measures in the longer term, including a TNC tax. She noted that SFMTA had been anticipating a \$320 million deficit in Fiscal Year 2026/27 once one-time federal and state funding is fully depleted.

Commissioner Fielder asked what SFMTA's funding reserve was.

Ms. Kirschbaum responded that SFMTA's policy was to have a reserve that was 10% of its annual budget and that the reserve was currently \$140 million.

Chair Melgar asked what SFMTA was doing with respect to shifting funding from capital spending to operations and if the proposed federal tariffs were going to impact the cost of capital projects moving forward. She questioned whether SFMTA was considering potentially renting some of the underutilized space in SFMTA-owned parking garages to TNC companies, something the San Francisco Planning Department opposed.

Ms. Kirschbaum said she hadn't been aware of any discussions with TNC companies, perhaps in part because of the cost of the necessary electrification infrastructure. She stated that capital costs for transportation projects had already been increasing significantly faster than inflation in part because there wasn't a strong pipeline for construction, maintenance, and other craft jobs. She noted that SFMTA had been working hard to address cost increases, for instance by building vendor relationships, using innovative delivery methods, and focusing on increasing competition for contracts. She said that she hadn't known what the impacts of recent federal policies would be on things like parts and the supply chain, but that SFMTA would work closely with the Controller's Office to understand industry trends.

Chair Melgar noted that SFMTA would likely need multiple revenue measures to address its funding shortfalls, which would be a heavy political lift. She stated that voters were concerned about whether or not transit riders were paying their fares. She said that she had heard an interest from the hospitality industry in a universal transit pass sold at the San Francisco International Airport that visitors could use on all transit operators.

Ms. Kirschbaum thanked Chair Melgar for the suggestion and noted that SFMTA was pursuing open credit card payments as an easier way for riders to pay to use the system. She said she would investigate where there had been an interim solution that SFMTA could pursue until that was implemented.

Chair Melgar stated that often credit card exchange rates were high for visitors from other countries.

During public comment, a commenter expressed their concern about SFMTA as an agency.

Roland Lebrun said SFMTA should have looked at the nexus between an increase in



downtown traffic congestion and a drop in parking revenue. He said that the explanation could be that people who used to drive and park downtown are now using TNCs. He recommended that SFMTA strongly consider a new TNC tax to address its transit operating deficit.

A commenter noted that there were many options to ticket TNCs and other vehicles that double park or park in locations where they were not entitled to use curbspace. They said there were opportunities for better enforcement because a large amount of fines had not been collected.

## **Items Recommended from the Personnel Committee**

### **11. [CLOSED SESSION] [Final Approval] Evaluate Public Employee Performance and Recommend Approval of the Executive Director's Performance Objectives for 2025 - ACTION**

The Board did not go into closed session.

There was no public comment.

The item was approved without objection by the following vote:

Ayes: Commissioners Chan, Chen, Dorsey, Engardio, Fielder, Mahmood,  
Mandelman, Melgar, Sauter, Sherrill, and Walton (11)

Absent: 0

### **12. [Final Approval] Set the Annual Compensation for the Executive Director for 2025 - ACTION**

There was no public comment.

The item was approved without objection by the following vote:

Ayes: Commissioners Chan, Chen, Dorsey, Engardio, Fielder, Mahmood,  
Mandelman, Melgar, Sauter, Sherrill, and Walton (11)

Absent: 0

## **Other Items**

### **13. Introduction of New Items - INFORMATION**

There were no new items introduced.

### **14. Public Comment**

During public comment, a commenter stated they were dissatisfied with the presentations and with the Board.

### **15. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:06 p.m.