

# Memorandum



**To:** Angela Calvillo, Clerk of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors

**Through:** For Julie Kirschbaum, Director of Transit *Emily Williams*  
Sean Kennedy, Transit Planning Manager

**From:** Jeffrey Tumlin, Director of Transportation *Jeffrey Tumlin*

**Date:** October 26, 2020

**Subject:** COVID-19 Muni Bus Service Adjustments and Associated Stop, Street and Parking Changes – August 22, 2020 – Project Sponsor CEQA Appeal Response

## INTRODUCTION

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) submits this memorandum in support of the Statutory Exemption determination (No. 2020-007286ENV) for the COVID-19 Muni Bus Service Adjustments and Associated Stop, Street and Parking Changes – August 22, 2020, also referred to as the COVID-19 bus service changes.

It is a response to two letters of appeal to the Board of Supervisors regarding the Planning Department’s issuance of a Statutory Exemption under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the project. The letter addresses topics other than those related to CEQA, which are separately discussed in the Planning Department’s appeal response memorandum.

## BACKGROUND

On February 25, 2020, Mayor London Breed issued a Proclamation Declaring the Existence of a Local Emergency (COVID-19 Local Emergency Proclamation), finding that the COVID-19 pandemic posed a threat to the lives, property or welfare of the City and County and its residents. On March 16, 2020, San Francisco’s Health Officer issued a Public Health Order (Order) in response to the COVID-19 Emergency, requiring that residents shelter in place, with the only exception being for essential needs and trips. Shortly after San Francisco’s shelter in place order was issued in March, the SFMTA implemented the COVID-19 Muni Core Service Plan (Core Service Plan), operating limited transit service, allocating limited resources to making connections where they are most needed.

A key goal of the transit service modifications is to support the community’s increased travel needs as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. Adding more frequent service on targeted routes would address crowding, pass-ups, and improve physical distancing between riders onboard buses. Since the Order was issued, Muni has implemented several service changes in response to dynamic conditions. The SFMTA has since seen an increase in the number of riders who are using transit for their essential trips. As such, the SFMTA proposed to modify the Core Service Plan on August 22, 2020 to increase service through the return of or modification of service on the following Muni routes: 7 Haight-Noriega; 12 Pacific Community Shuttle; 14 Mission; 28 19th Ave; 37 Corbett; 38 Geary; 44 O’Shaughnessy; 45 Union-Stockton; 48 Quintara-24th Street; 49 Van Ness/Mission; 54 Felton; and 67 Bernal Heights, and through improving frequency for the following Muni routes: 8 Bayshore; 9 San Bruno; 9R San Bruno Rapid; 12 Pacific Community Shuttle; 14

Mission; 19 Polk; 22 Fillmore; 24 Divisadero; 25 Treasure Island; 28 19th Ave; 29 Sunset; 43 Masonic; and 44 O'Shaughnessy.

These bus service changes provide increased transit service during the health emergency and are temporary in nature. Any stop, street, and parking changes implemented as part of these bus service changes will expire 120 days after termination of the City's COVID-19 Local Emergency Proclamation. An overall transit service plan for the City following the termination of the City's COVID-19 Local Emergency Proclamation will be presented to the SFMTA Board of Directors and any service-associated stop, street and parking changes that requires SFMTA Board of Directors approval to be made permanent will be sought.

## DISCUSSION

### **The COVID-19 Muni bus service changes are intended to add frequency on routes experiencing crowding and to add connections for people making essential trips on Muni.**

The changes to the Core Service Plan are informed by robust quantitative data and feedback from customers and operations staff in each iteration. Criteria for the expansion of service under the Core Service Plan includes serving major corridors, addressing demand on routes experiencing high ridership, and establishing connections to essential destinations like hospitals and grocery stores.

San Francisco's response to the pandemic has stressed the importance of social distancing, or maintaining adequate space between individuals, to control the spread of COVID-19. Despite the incremental expansion of service, Muni continues to have resource constraints to increasing transit service.

During the COVID-19 crisis, the SFMTA's ability to provide transit service has been limited in the following ways:

- fewer operators are available, due to health and safety concerns;
- fewer vehicles are available, due to increased cleaning requirements; and
- the passenger capacity on vehicles is limited due to social distancing requirements..

As such, the focus of the August service changes was to support ridership safety by increasing service on routes experiencing high ridership to support adequate physical distancing and access to essential services.

### **The COVID-19 bus service changes were authorized by the Director of Transit and the associated stop, street, and parking changes were authorized by the San Francisco Transportation Code.**

Due to the urgent need to restore some Muni bus service to reduce crowding on the city's transit network, the COVID-19 service changes were approved on a temporary emergency basis. The Director of Transit had authority to approve these temporary transit service changes on August 19, 2020 through a series of service bulletins as summarized in service bulletin 2020-OB-0696.

The City Traffic Engineer also has authority to approve certain temporary emergency traffic modifications pursuant Section 201 of the San Francisco Transportation Code. Section 201(a)(5) of the Transportation Code allows the City Traffic Engineer to "(i)nstall or remove any temporary Traffic Control Devices on any

Street for the purpose of controlling Parking or traffic during emergencies, special conditions or events, construction work, short-term testing, or when necessary for the protection of public health and safety. Such temporary Traffic Control Devices shall be removed when they are no longer required following the emergency, condition, or event.” As a result, any associated stop, street, and parking changes to support the bus service changes are authorized under the San Francisco Transportation Code and were approved by the City Traffic Engineer, as needed, on July 30, 2020.

**The 30 Stockton extension project was initiated pre-COVID-19 and is planned as a permanent project.**

The 30 Stockton extension project is the extension of the 30 Stockton Muni route, approximately one mile, from its previous endpoint in the Marina District (Broderick at Jefferson Street) to its new terminal near Crissy Field in the Presidio. A short segment of the extension (less than 1,200 feet) is on streets managed by the City and County of San Francisco. The remainder of the extended route is in the Presidio, on federal property managed by the Presidio Trust.

The 30 Stockton extension project was initiated pre-COVID-19 and is planned as a permanent project. As a result, the 30 Stockton extension project received its own environmental clearance (Case No. 2020-0055991ENV) separate from the August bus changes. The Director of Transit had authority to approve the project on September 16, 2020 through bulletin 2020-OB-0699.

**Quick, responsive action that can be iterated upon is imperative during this public health crisis.**

During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, the SFMTA has moved quickly to ensure continued transportation safety. The COVID-19 bus service changes are an opportunity to respond to emergency transportation challenges and ensure transportation safety and public health during this unprecedented time. Continuous change in response to crowding, public health orders, and to optimize effective use of resources in response to the current health crisis and public health guidance is critical. The COVID-19 bus changes are temporary and protect transit riders from crowding and exposure to COVID-19.

Accordingly, we ask that the San Francisco Board of Supervisors uphold the use of a California Environmental Quality Act Statutory Exemption to allow for the implementation of the COVID-19 bus service and associated stop, street and parking changes.