

September 24, 2021

To: Golden Gate National Recreation Area (goga_business@nps.gov)
CC: San Francisco Board of Supervisors
Re: Oppose parking fees in GGNRA parking lots in San Francisco

The Sunset-Parkside Education and Action Committee (SPEAK) is a 501(c)3 organization which has been an active voice in the Sunset-Parkside district for over 50 years. We represent residents in this area that borders Ocean Beach and Golden Gate Park.

We oppose the proposal by the GGNRA to charge for parking at various nearby national parks in San Francisco.

The GGNRA has proposed to charge \$3.00 an hour to park a car to visit these parks with a maximum charge of \$10. We support our parks, but we also support access to our parks by San Francisco residents. This fee will discourage San Franciscans from coming to these parks to enjoy the magnificent ocean views, to experience wildlife in a natural setting, and to get a respite from the stresses of urban life, made even more difficult during the COVID pandemic.

We also wonder why there have been no public notices posted in the proposed fee areas. At any time, but especially during the COVID pandemic, it is vital that government agencies make every effort to inform the public of any proposed changes that will impact access to their public lands. Notices should be posted at all of the proposed fee locations, and the comment period should be extended 30 days from the posting of the notices.

According to the GGNRA website,

"The proposal calls for parking fees to be in effect at these locations between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., which means that people visiting outside these hours would not be charged for parking. Many visitors to the park travel by bicycle or foot, and public transit which operates in close vicinity to many of the affected parking lots, including Stinson Beach, Lands End and Baker Beach, offers an inexpensive alternative to driving."

Let's unpack this statement.

1. It is accompanied by a photo of a healthy, relatively young person on a bicycle. However, the majority of people in SF do not bike from one end of the city to the other because of various reasons -- disabilities, dangerous streets, the cost of a good bicycle, and due to the hilly nature of the City - a bicyclist has to be in good shape to get around.

2. "People visiting outside [the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.] would not be charged for parking." It gets dark at 5:00 p.m. during the winter months and the sun at times does not rise until 7:30 a.m. So the public might have ½ hour in the early morning to park for free. And really, how many families visit parks in the early morning or in the evening?
3. Bus service in San Francisco has been severely curtailed during COVID. It is not clear when it will recover or which lines will survive.
4. Many people still do not want to expose their health to others on a bus.
5. Parking fees will also limit access for residents from the southeastern part of San Francisco, who may have to drive to these areas - especially families with small children. Many are lower-income. They deserve the opportunity to enjoy parkland without impediments such as fees. And riding MUNI will cost at least as much as the parking, for 2 adults. It is not an 'inexpensive' alternative. (These families may already own cars to get their children to school and other events and to drive to work.)
6. MUNI service is not back to full service, due to COVID. Even when - and if - MUNI service is restored, being forced to go across town by bus is going to make park visitation more difficult for most San Francisco residents.
7. Charging fees at the GGNRA lots will force residents to park in the lots at Ocean Beach, filling up those lots and further limiting access. These fees set a precedent for charging San Franciscans for access to our beaches. Fees may spread to other park sites, including City parks such as Ocean Beach.

We therefore oppose these fees and ask you to discontinue this proposal.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Eileen Boken

Eileen Boken

President



Sunset Rises to Action

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September 24, 2021

To: Golden Gate National Recreation Area

Subject: Proposed Parking Fees - OPPOSE

D4ward is a residents' forward-thinking advocacy group dedicated to meeting the challenges of the future while preserving and enhancing the unique character of District 4 and San Francisco.

As neighbors to District 1 and residents of the western part of San Francisco, D4ward opposes the proposal by the GGNRA to charge for parking at various nearby national parks. In San Francisco Sutro Heights Park, Merrie Way and the Naval Memorial lots at Land's End, China Beach, and Baker Beach will all become less available to the public due to these fees. We support parks, but we also support access to parks by San Francisco residents. The fees will discourage San Franciscans from coming to these parks to enjoy the magnificent ocean views, to experience wildlife in a natural setting, and to get a respite from the stresses of urban life, made even more difficult during the COVID pandemic.

We find the lack of public notice for such a sweeping change to access to public lands to be disturbing. D4ward learned about this proposal by accident, as there has been no notice posted at the lots closest to District 4. During COVID, when the public is often cut off from community meetings and other news sources, it is vital that government agencies make every effort to inform of any proposed changes, especially those involving fees. Therefore, at a minimum, notices should be posted at all of the proposed fee locations, and the comment period should be extended 30 days from the posting of the notices.

Located at the farthest northwestern corner of San Francisco, the national parks are not central to the homes of the majority of the City's population. Fees will be especially onerous for people from the southeastern part of San Francisco, which contains a large number of under-served communities. Due to the distance to these parks, their most likely form of transportation is a car - especially for families with children. They deserve the opportunity to enjoy parkland without impediments such as fees. MUNI service is not back to full service, due to COVID. Even when - and if - MUNI service is restored, being forced to go across town by bus is going to make park visitation more difficult for these families. If a fee is allowed, it sets a precedent. Fees will rise and will spread to other park sites, including City parks such as Ocean Beach.

We therefore oppose these fees and ask you to discontinue this proposal.

cc: SF Board of Supervisors